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Exchange & Flow: An anthology

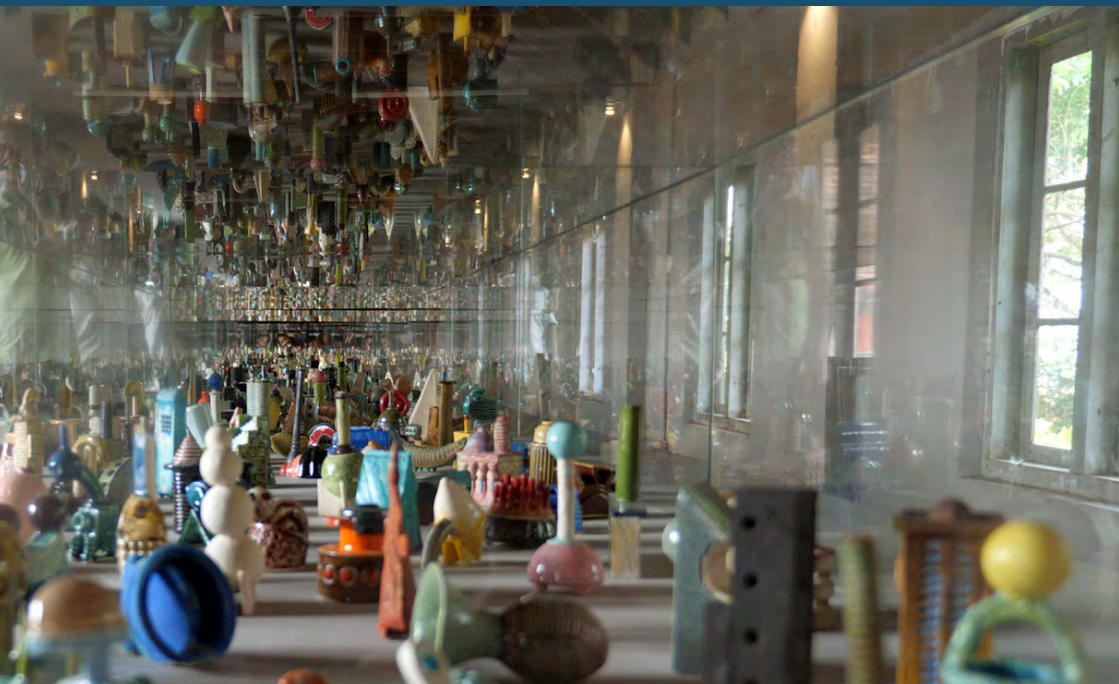
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EXCHANGE & FLOW

An Anthology



Transtechnology Research at University of Plymouth, UK

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Cover image:
Metropolis by artist Lubna Chowdhary, ongoing multi-object work 1991-2018.

Exchange & Flow

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Photo: Annalisa Mansukhani

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Foreword



Sometime in the early 2000's Martha Blassnigg and I became curious about some formal similarities between early television advertising and the kinds of experimental films made by artists in the 1960s and 1970s. As we pondered this we were fortunate to be able to share our thoughts with longstanding colleagues in the EYE Film Institute Netherlands in Amsterdam, the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision in Hilversum, VU University, Amsterdam and the University of Applied Arts, Vienna. Over time we became convinced that the similarities were not coincidental and needed some serious thought. With a substantial grant from the Humanities in the European Area Fund (HERA) we were able to lead a team of around ten researchers from across the EU to look at just this from a number of perspectives. The project was called Technology, Exchange and Flow, (TEF) and ran from 2010-2013. It culminated in a large exhibition in the Kunsthalle in Vienna in which the audience experience and responses to short films and advertisements contributed to the research process. The successes of our collaborative methods and the support that it gave to wide participation and knowledge exchange as a method also inspired us to stage a large two-day public event called Advertising the Sublime at the EYE and the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (again funded by HERA). The outcome of this collaboration continues to have resonance and provide the inspiration for our academic research today.

The immediate impact of this project was chiefly on a reassessment of the cultural value placed on advertising films by important archives, and the consequent need to revisit preservation policy. It also contributed to the growing understanding of the way television is used as an active determinant of the cultural attitudes and values that are important to its users. This sentiment chimed with some research that Joanna Griffin undertook into the 1970s audience-led television experiment of the Indian space programme and, through the amazing opportunities at Kochi and funding from the AHRC UK we have been able to re-contextualise the HERA/TEF project and share original research in a public collaboration. In doing so we hope to contribute to a range of critical contexts in India considering media as a site of 'exchange and flow'. The writing in this booklet, which provides a legacy of the impact of the creative activities of the workshop in Kochi, clearly points the way to a number of new initiatives beyond academia which we never imagined our initial curiosity about the formal qualities of adverts might lead to.

Michael Punt
May 2019

Preface

While the Technology, Exchange and Flow (TEF) research project was underway from 2010-2013 in Europe, I was shifting between Plymouth and Bangalore immersed in doctoral research concerning experimental media arts, audience and participation in the Moon mission of the Indian space programme. The closeness between the two projects only emerged much later and hinges on my discovery of an archive of early television material owned by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) that was co-produced with space scientists, artists and audiences in the 1970s. The following briefly outlines how and why this archive connects to the *Exchange & Flow* writing workshop and adds to the spectrum of translations from TEF research that appear in this booklet.

Television became part of the Indian space programme's remit because of its founder Vikram Sarabhai's distinctive societal vision for India's use of space technology, which countered the planetary focus of the United States and Soviet Union. He saw space technology as a development tool that would link India's villages to the latest health and agriculture information by broadcasting educational television programmes via orbiting satellites to village TV sets linked to inexpensive chicken wire antennas. Before his death in 1971, he initiated the project's management structure from its Ahmedabad headquarters. From August 1975 in collaboration with NASA a national satellite television experiment operated for one year. When this large-scale and well documented project came to an end, the space scientists in Ahmedabad, under the leadership of Yash Pal and later E.V.Chitnis, continued the pilot on a local level by broadcasting programmes from the Ahmedabad Earth Station to a relay tower in Pij that transmitted the signal to outlying villages in the district of Kheda. For several years, under the umbrella of the Kheda Communications Project, an unprecedented model of interdisciplinary, collaborative television production emerged that encouraged audiences to take the lead and was made possible through the reciprocity between space scientists and creative practitioners – including faculty and students from the National Institute of Design (NID) and the Film and Television Institute of India, renowned theatre artists such as Hasmukh Baradi and puppeteers from Darpana Academy of Performing Arts.

The involvement of creative practitioners as well as audiences in the production of television led by ISRO was of particular interest to me because in 2008 I was invited to Bangalore to mentor, as artist-in-residence, a two-year interdisciplinary collaboration with ISRO called Moon Vehicle. India had launched the Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft in 2008 on a mission to the Moon, causing disquiet amongst arts and culture sectors that the space programme had disavowed its founding societal remit. In reaction, a group came together from those sectors in 2007 to convene a Symposium on Space and Culture held at the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore in an attempt to initiate broader cultural collaboration with ISRO. Sundar Sarukkai and Roger Malina, *Exchange & Flow* project partners through *Leonardo*, were instrumental in bringing about this interdisciplinary forum. Out of the symposium came the idea for Moon Vehicle to bring visibility to the cultural dimensions of the mission. As a recent International Arts Council England Artist Fellow at the NASA Space Science Lab, UC Berkeley, I was invited to mentor Moon Vehicle as artist-in-residence based at Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology in Bangalore. Working with design students, children and a number of

Chandrayaan mission scientists, we found ways to demonstrate our inclusion, as audience, in the mission. Inevitably our activities also demonstrated the gap between the rhetorical claims of space missions to be for all humanity and the reality of our delimited role as the audience of space technology. Nonetheless, Moon Vehicle led to an unprecedented interdisciplinary collaboration between Srishti Institute, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the Indian Institute of Astronomy, the Visveswaraya Industrial and Technological Museum and the Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium. Together these institutions, with their spectrum of methods and paradigms, produced a public festival of the science and culture of astronomy. The consortium effort was talked about as a first in India and was thought to be the only example of ISRO collaborating with an arts organisation. It was only later in my research that a collaboration in the 1970s between ISRO and the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad came to light and it shared a number of similarities with Moon Vehicle in terms of the motivations that generated the exchange and flow between the partners. With funding through a postdoctoral Teaching Fellowship at CEPT University, I spent a year in Ahmedabad researching the sparsely documented interactions between creative practitioners and space scientists that led to audiences in rural villages in the Kheda district becoming co-producers of their own television shows.

Returning to Plymouth in 2017, with new knowledge of the significance of whatever material remained of ISRO's Kheda television experiment, the TEF research now resonated deeply with the extraordinary interdisciplinary and audience-led endeavours that appeared on the brink of being lost to media history and more importantly to the audience-participants themselves and the cultural histories of their communities. Dinaz Kalwachwala was one of the NID design students who worked with ISRO scientists in the 1970s and for her diploma project she created a series of five television programmes which were devised with children. The programme series was called *Reti ni Otl* and for the *Exchange & Flow* project we planned to find the tapes in the National Institute of Design library or the ISRO library where they had been deposited in 1977 and screen them back in the village where they were made. The plan was to mimic the screenings held at the EYE Film Institute Netherlands for the Advertising the Sublime event held in 2013, which had demonstrated to the curators the value audiences felt for archive material. We hoped a similar event might have the effect of raising the profile of the programme tapes and result in rights of access for the material's co-producers. Dr Lalitha Poluru, Head Librarian at the National Institute of Design located Dinaz's written diploma project submitted in 1977 which outlined her process and gave details of the children she worked with, but the videotapes were not there. With Dr Poluru's support we approached ISRO who also searched for the tapes, but with no success. In April 2018 Dinaz and I met in Mumbai and hatched a new plan: we would find the original participants and remake *Reti ni Otl*, using the recollections of the children she had worked with to re-enact the lost material.

For the first phase of *Exchange & Flow*, Dinaz and I, together with sound recordist Amit Bhavsar and cinematographer Ravji Sondarva, returned to the village where *Reti ni Otl* was filmed and we met with four of the eight children Dinaz had worked with forty years previously. Significantly, through the filming, we were able to tap

into a resilient archive of shared memory, held by both the original participants and many others who also remembered the television adventure. The events it seemed had retained their currency and were still frequently recalled amongst families who expressed a collective wish for the programmes to be found. By requesting new searches at ISRO, at the national television organisation Doordarshan, at the Gujarat Institute of Educational Technology and at the National Institute of Design, we learnt how materials were circulated and at intervals destroyed, thrown away, taped over or otherwise rendered obsolete. Equally, we saw extensive efforts to preserve and make materials available. Just as Moon Vehicle provided a means by which to devise the terms for our own inclusion in the Chandrayaan mission, so too, re-filming Reti ni Otli generated evidence of audience stake in the television archive. A great success of the project is that the communities themselves are now taking on the search because of the new information we were able to share through the filming process. A rough cut of the film, edited by Dinaz Kalwachwala was screened as part of the workshop, which brought these important voices into the arena of the workshop inquiry. This parallel project draws on the relevance of the framework of *Exchange & Flow* to India's histories of audience-led endeavours and highlights the existing vulnerabilities of this cultural heritage.

The weaving of avant garde film practices into mainstream advertising was a leitmotif of the HERA funded Technology, Exchange and Flow research project from which *Exchange & Flow* draws inspiration. Likewise, the weaving of practices, methods and insights enacted and gained at the workshop into other contexts to provide conditions for transformation has been the leitmotif of the *Exchange & Flow* writing workshop in Kochi. The curator's theme 'Possibilities for a non-alienated life' suggests the Biennale is prototyping: That it is a place to rehearse and to practise numerous possibilities for shifting intransigence and that equally it is a place to reestablish encounters with the familiar and homely.

The two parts of the *Exchange & Flow* project: the writing workshop in Kochi and revisiting memories of early television experiments in Ahmedabad have not only brought new insights but also new and treasured friendships. It has been a privilege to meet so many generous, talented and creative minds through the course of this project and to find registered in the writing contained in this booklet the sense of purpose our collective foray has ignited.

Joanna Griffin

Introduction

This book is an archive of the *Exchange & Flow* writing workshop, its process, participants and impact. The first part documents the workshop, its modalities and approaches to writing. The second part presents new writing by participants in the form of experimental texts, reflections, proposals for writing projects and for research inspired by *Exchange & Flow*. As a collection, we hope that these materials will offer not only an archive of the project, but a resource for ongoing reflection and new work, and allow contributors to revisit the events of the workshop in continued engagement with their own inspiration and one another's thoughts. This book both offers a document of a process and a kind of manual to take forward writing, research, creative practice, cultural work, institutional change and societal actions.

Exchange & Flow set out to explore the perceptual apparatuses, experiences and associations at play when artworks are publically presented. It opened up the theme of exchange and flow – between the medium of artworks and viewing audience – to a group of writers who engaged as audience, reflected, and then translated their insights and experiences to wider contexts. The new writing that appears in this booklet provides insights into the central question posed in the workshop: 'What do audiences do with artworks?' The answers to this question are pertinent not only to the Biennale that hosted the workshop, but also, and crucially, are intended to be transferable beyond the Biennale. A key objective of the workshop was to produce a secure space for courageous thinking about the proactive work and role of audience in order to bring new thinking to more vulnerable or challenging contexts, where the proactive work of audience (as consumer, user, viewer, player, etc.) might be overlooked or require more celebration.

The Kochi-Muziris Biennale was an especially appropriate host for the workshop. Known as the 'People's Biennale,' it works towards bringing new audiences to engage with contemporary international art. Anita Dube, who curated the 2018 edition, was emphatic in championing the central role of audience stating: "The public stage will belong to everybody who wants to claim it – I'll open up that structure, and it's for people to claim that structure." Her vision amplified the status of the Biennale as a beacon in India for a society confident in its aims to be liberal, inclusive, egalitarian and democratic. As such, the Biennale is deeply invested in questions of how artistic media practices activate audiences and are generative of multiple processes of exchange and flow. In this edition, its accommodating structure provided a substantial means of expression for the public discussion of crises and both the #metoo campaign and the Kerala floods receive attention within this anthology.

The Writers

It was clear the workshop would be extraordinary when applications began to pour in. With over sixty writers applying in the two weeks the call was open, the enthusiasm for this kind of writing workshop was evident as well as the demand for more such opportunities. Twenty-seven writers participated who were mainly from India, with participants also from Bangladesh, Germany and the

UK. In order to create robust evidence that could be transported elsewhere, we chose participants from as wide a range of contexts as possible who could cascade knowledge acquired to further constituencies. The biographies of the writers, included towards the end of this book, indicate their range of experience, including online journal editors and contributors, an NGO research director, a curator, performer, law student, lecturer, history of art student, information manager, media artist, filmmaker, an archivist, a tourism entrepreneur, a product designer and a tarot card reader.

Motivations to join were wide ranging, including the potential for social justice by critically appraising modes of inclusion at the Biennale. Shaista Banu, working for the Food Corporation India wrote, of how the Biennale stood “in defiance to the normalisation of conflicts and exclusion,” challenging, “political conflicts, gender and racial discrimination, the erosion of quality of life by capitalism.” Media artist Sahaj Umang Singh Bhatia wrote of the workshop potentially helping him understand better, “the relationship of audiences with camera-phones and artwork” and he wanted to find out, “How do different people photograph artworks, for personal documentation or aesthetic reasons and use them in the future, and what scope does it open up for the audience to give another layer to the artwork?” Samira Bose, who worked with the Kochi Biennale Foundation responded to the potential reframing offered by the workshop, writing: “I am interested in not only exchange and flow, but exchange ‘as’ flow. The word ‘flow’ appeals to me because it indicates something that isn’t fixed, something that morphs and orients itself, that is shaped differently each time.” Mohita Ghosal, also working with the Biennale, identified a need to, “investigate how we can build new processes of reception and methods of engagement that are more inclusive – specifically, that are less theoretical and more intuitive.” Many responded to the original structure of the five-day workshop and all were keen to use the dynamic of the group experience to generate new writing.

The Workshop

Exchange & Flow took place over five days as part of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2018 programme of events from 1-5 March 2019. In order to develop insights around the question, ‘*What do audiences do with artworks?*’ five workshop facilitators led workshops the goal of which was to examine the nature of viewing experiences. We first developed techniques to connect with and consider our own experiences of the Biennale, then worked actively and creatively to expand those experiences and explore other modalities of being in the space of the exhibitions. Concurrently, we worked to think about how we might translate our insights into words, spoken and written. In order to activate change and critical reflection on what these experiences might mean in the wider context’s of participant’s own practices and concerns, we invited four special guests whose distinctive work recontextualised the insights of the workshop to a broader reach of ongoing audience-led concerns in India and elsewhere

The first day, led by **Dr Hannah Drayson**, provided the group with techniques for turning attention to dimensions of experience that are often overlooked when

we engage in the intellectual work of viewing, deciphering and explaining. Drayson introduced techniques from micro-phenomenology, an interview technique in which sensory memories are evoked to provide rich and layered recall of pre-reflexive experience. She uses these techniques in her own research into the aesthetic dimensions of technologies in medicine and healing practices. The workshop drew to attention the collective nature of memory and the production of experience through exchanges of first, second and third person perspectives. Transferred to the question ‘What do audiences do with artworks?’ the shift of focus to phenomenology introduced a shared orientation and vocabularies that would shape the coming days.

The second day was spent in the Biennale actively extending viewing experiences through four workshops which focused on the pre-verbal and sensory, offering space for the writers to reconsider their own habitual responses to being placed in the role of audience member. **Murielle Ikareth**, a creative movement therapist, led her group through the exhibition spaces responding with movement to artworks, in a process that all found to be extraordinarily revealing of the connection between visual perception and the body. Her group described dancing freely in the Ottolith video installation Shantiniketan and by following threads of stitching in Priya Ravish Mehra’s hanging tapestries Fragment One accessing a fuller engagement in what they saw. **Christophe Boyer**, a voice improvisation specialist, offered his group the liberating opportunity to use their voices to respond to artworks and feel, “something is singing inside of me that is not me.” Artist photographer/filmmaker **Jacqueline Knight** led participants in the creation of photo essays asking the group to witness the encounters visitors have with artworks and “to show and not tell” through their photographs. Exploring image making technologies in and around the exhibition space, participants mapped their own shifts in physical and attentional orientation and the ways in which visitors to the Biennale used camera technologies in their engagements with the work. Graphic artist **Udit Parekh** led a workshop in experimental drawing, using sensory associations as a starting point and dots and lines as a method of touching the pre-verbal origins of words through drawing.

The third day was open for other visitors to the Biennale to join and collaborate. Working in small groups, writers led their own experimental workshops, revisiting aspects of previous day’s viewing experiences in more depth by working with others and sharing and testing their developing ideas. Those who joined brought valuable and fresh perspectives and the day culminated in a public spoken word performance in the Biennale Pavilion, using writing and improvised performance generated on the day. For some it was on this day that the realisation that “I am audience” and not an observer of audience began to dawn and the humility required of arts and humanities led enquiry to access and validate flows of poetic subjectivity.

The fourth day offered a transition, shifting attention to questions of how the insights attained during the work so far might translate to other contexts, specifically those of concern to the participant writers. Using the model of round table discussion in small groups used by the doctoral researchers at

Transtechology Research at the University of Plymouth, Hannah Drayson, Jacqueline Knight and Joanna Griffin mentored three group discussions aimed at developing new writing trajectories. Following this, through the project's partnership with *Leonardo* journal, Professor **Sundar Sarukkai**, talked to the group about issues for writers publishing from India. He spoke of theorising experience as a twofold problem: firstly of the challenge for an academic community representing social contexts they had no direct experience of themselves, and secondly, a lack of development of new theoretical frameworks despite researchers in India producing amongst the largest output of empirical social science data anywhere. The challenge for this group of writers was similar and he encouraged critical engagement with theoretical frameworks to avoid the problem of "reproducing mediocre theories, with their mediocrities" and to find new languages and new forms of writing about social experience.

In the evening **Dinaz Kalwachwala** presented a rough cut of the film-in-progress she is working on with Joanna Griffin that seeks to preserve material from an audience-led television experiment. The reenactment of the lost television programme *Reti ni Othi* that was devised by children with Dinaz in 1977 is a key dimension of the broader *Exchange & Flow* project and belongs to a decade of audience-led television produced, unusually, by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The film that Griffin and Kalwachwala are working on will bring to light the challenge of accessing the archive, which is closed to the public within the high security walls of the ISRO compound in Ahmedabad. It is an example of a critical context that would benefit from attention to the reciprocity between audiences and archive materials. The presentation brought important voices from rural communities into the workshop space and acted as a bridge to the focus of the final day on the activation of the framework of *Exchange & Flow* for real-world challenges.

Over the fifth day, the theme of transferability and translation extended into an evaluation led by four invited speakers whose presentations illustrated critical contexts where the themes and insights of *Exchange & Flow* mattered or were actively practiced. Mark Paul Meyer, Senior Curator at the EYE Film Institute Netherlands strengthened the case for access to archives by relaying his own experience at EYE. He spoke of the need to offer artists, filmmakers and scholars opportunities to immerse themselves in archives in order to generate new criteria for valuing collections. He used the example of the *Advertising the Sublime* event held as part of the HERA Technology, Exchange and Flow research project in 2013 to illustrate the revelations that opening collections of adverts to public viewing had brought. He described the Proustian way that advertising material—not previously considered a main focus of a film archive—had the unanticipated effect of unlocking shared memories of times past. The considerable responses of audiences to an exhibition of advertising materials produced as part of the project had provided the archive with a robust argument for resourcing the continued preservation of these ephemeral and neglected materials. As Meyer pointed out, many of the artworks in the Biennale actively reclaimed layers of archival material found in Kochi, where the devastation of the floods had reassembled the archival

narrative once more. As curator, this continual retelling of the archive through the discoveries of users, and non-human forces, restated the collections' living relevance.

Dr **Jahnavi Phalkey** presented her radical approach to engaging audiences at Science Gallery Benagaluru where as Director she is currently overseeing the gallery's construction. She spoke of her ethos of co-creation and of steering an architectural design that would be driven from the perspective of the knowledge production of the gallery visitor. Attention to exchange and flow in this context meant exhibiting the collaborative venture of scientific knowledge production, drawing attention to the audience, or visitor's, implicit role within this process. The participatory workshops and labs she envisions for woodwork, milling, plaster, biocultures and more will lure audiences into active participation in the interpretation of knowledge production, implicating audience at the very heart of scientific and technological construction.¹ She stressed that while she is able to make this intervention in the context of Science Gallery, it is the problem of 'audience' in education where India's real challenges lie and where a fundamental change in approach is needed. She spoke, for instance, of the harm competition-led schooling does to the development of collaborative intellectual capabilities. Opening the processes of exchange that constitute the production of scientific knowledge and providing a space for long-term learning as well as forums for artists, social scientists, and scientists to work together at Science Gallery will provide a compelling model for change.

Sundar Sarukkai's presentation further provoked the need, particularly for writers, to confront asymmetries in processes of knowledge production and exchange, which the premise of *Exchange & Flow* could potentially disarm. In the Indian debate on scientific temper, he outlined the problem of "speaking on behalf of others" pointing out how the term has been used to "to create a distinction between a particular elite and the so-called ordinary people who don't possess this [scientific temper]." The ethics of who can talk about someone else's experience has been the subject of his book *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian debate on experience and theory* (2013), written with Gopal Guru, as well as their forthcoming book *Experience, Caste and the Everyday Social* (2019), in which he makes a distinction between the ownership and authorship of experience. The exclusionary consequences of the exchange and flow of experience are matters for concern, particularly demanding careful attention to the social conditions that make any form of experience possible. For this activist-focused edition of the Biennale, lived experience, not necessarily of the author/artist, often features as subject matter, and raises ethical questions regarding who might speak on behalf of whom. This asks us to remain vigilant in considering the shaping of discourse by social context and continue looking for spaces in which agency, expression and exchange are possible, perhaps unexpectedly so.

¹ See Martha Blassnigg (2013) "'Free Play' between Science, Art and Conjuring: Advertising and the knowing prosumer". in Jahrmann, M. and Felderer, B. (eds.) *Play & Prosume: Schleichende Werbung und schnelle Avantgarde*. Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst.

Finally, Professor Ashoke Chatterjee, former Director of the National Institute of Design (NID) recalled the Ahmedabad Declaration on Design for Development which was drawn up at an international conference convened by NID in 1979. The ethos of NID and the objectives of the conference were to use design for the empowerment of users. He outlined how 1979 was the time of the environmental movement and the extent to which what emerged from the conference foreshadowed change on an international scale. Echoing Jahnvi Phalkey's concerns for the education system in India he recalled that the National Institute of Design, lacking exams or grades, was able to pursue a radical and successful form of education that laid responsibility with the student because it elided official attention. His final assessment of the Biennale experience in Kochi was an observation of the inherent tensions released where 'scope for play' is made available for audiences, with seemingly portentous consequences as these were characteristics of a democratic society. Working through these tensions in the version of an Indian democracy modeled at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, was part of an exercise in ameliorating current miscarriages of justice. In conclusion, and mimicking the process of the Ahmedabad Declaration, Chatterjee brought the writers, facilitators and guests together to outline a first draft Kochi Declaration for Audiences, which captures a set of aspirations from the workshop that will be distributed to prompt altruistic reassessments of audience-led endeavours more widely.

The Writing

The new writing anthology section begins with a series of short pieces that subtly convey the fluidity of lived experience with artworks and the capacities of artefacts to both mediate and frame realities. **Hamsini Harihan's** 'How to spot a rainbow at a Biennale' responds to the refreshing cool mists created by artist Temsuyanger Longkumer in which rainbows appear day and night. **Anushka Jasraj** brings the non-human agency of the tarot to bear on an interpretation of her five-days with 'Five-card tarot reading for Kochi Biennale 2018.' **Rupsa Kundu's** short story 'A conversation in a coffee shop' centres on the everyday concerns of her three protagonist Biennale visitors and deftly observes their varied attempts to gather meaning from their viewing, capturing the exhibition's glancing relevance to the composition of their lives. **Harshada Desai** in 'Time telling' builds a thought experiment from the perspective of an alarm clock, translating the framework of *Exchange & Flow* to a reflection on the reciprocity between the design of timepieces and our experience of time. **Asmita Sarkar**, considers reciprocity 'Outside and Inside the Kochi Biennale' reflecting on the tantalising to-and-fro between artworks and the richly historical location of Fort Kochi. **Rohana Jeyaraj** raises the question of the ability of a city to accommodate the imagination of a biennale, contrasting her observations of Kochi to her hometown the industrial city Coimbatore where she suspects a biennale would not be welcome. The ability of a city to accommodate the multiple perspectives and provocations of a biennale is a measure of many other kinds of tolerance. **Jo Simmons** reflects frankly from her own perspective on the ways the Biennale unexpectedly made her aware of

her own rootedness in Kerala as she watched it unfold once again, a participant observer of its many back stories. **Soorya S. Shenoy** appraises the Guerrilla Girls from the perspective of her exchanges with her mother over the work presented in the Biennale and its intention, providing a cultural filtering of the artists' apparently universal feminist themes.

A number of writers, report on the unexpectedly revealing process during the opening series of workshops of experiencing heightened embodied perception. Hannah Drayson's workshop brought to mind the dependency of memory on our physical interaction with space and this was amplified through the movement, voice, drawing and photography workshops. When the groups began to dance and sing in response to artworks, or use their fingers like phone cameras, uncharted dimensions of perception opened. The latent ability of our bodies to perceive became activated and palpable. **Murielle Ikareth's** reflections on this phenomenon opens the next section of writing which focuses more directly on the work of audience in the presence of artworks. **Sahaj Umang Singh Bhatia**, a media performance artist, arrived with a curiosity about how mobile phones affect viewing experiences and writes in 'fragmented eyeballs' of the co-discovery that fingers can emulate the viewing work of the phone. **Celina Basra** further opens the box of unending possible identities of audience as she recalls artist Claus Oldenberg's approach to art-making in 'For an Art that a kid licks after peeling away the wrapper.' In Postscript I and II she reflects on the importance of Drayson's workshop techniques for turning attention to experience for her as a curator and the responsibilities she holds towards artworks. **Ananya Rajoo** closes the section, drawing our attention to the transforming work of a co-visitor, and feeling "a closeness to the art like never before".

Engaging with critical perspectives emerging from attention to the question of exhibition and audience, **Faris Kallayi** considers viewing practices as moulded by the philosophical tradition of valuing mind over body. His short piece 'Viewer Views Art/ Art Views Viewer' touches on significant themes for the art of viewing and offer a plan for future writing. **Mohita Ghosal's** photo essay uses a semi-animated sequence of images to convey a perceptual encounter with artworks. Rather than illustrate the viewing experience, this series of images aims to provide a photographic equivalence. Using photography to critically comment on the ambiguities of inclusivity, **Shaista Banu** presents an annotated photo essay of the Biennale workforce. Her proposal is to translate this way of researching to her own workplace in the Food Corporation of India, in order to address questions of inclusivity and ethos. Finally, **Jacqueline Knight** brings humour to the realities of exhibition viewing in her piece about the long-recognised phenomenon of 'museum fatigue'. Symmetry is required in the commitment bestowed on artworks by both artist and viewer, however, at large-scale biennales there is only so much we can take in. Can the physical failings of art audiences ever be cured?

Shifting attention to the archive, **Dr Lalitha Poloru** translates the imperative of exchange and flow to the preservation and circulation of archival material, sketching a manifesto for knowledge dissemination hubs, formerly known as libraries. Her framework gives agency and authorship to users at this critical

moment in time when digitisation marks a momentous technological transition for artefacts and access. Following this, **Annalisa Mansukhani's** reflection on memory reminds that the archive is modeled on our own faculties for remembering and forgetting. **Archit Guha** is in the process of researching the history of the cyclone as a scientific concept and reflects on how the workshop might make him think differently about his own 'performance' of the archive as user.

The final section includes a number of proposals for ongoing writing and research. **Seema Massot** reflects on how micro-interviewing will develop her art writing practice in a series of forthcoming publications. **Ajithlal Sivalal** describes how he proposes to develop his live performance work *Jasmine Walk* into a new phase of participatory exploration. **Sateesh Kumar** explains the coincidence of the workshop with writing the final scene of a play in which fishermen locating those stranded by the flood undertake data management with boats and mobile phones. **Jo Simons** writes succinctly of her aspiration to write a collection of short stories. Lastly, **Udit Parekh** presents his concept for the drawing workshop, in which sensations find correspondence with dots that become lines that become images or words.

It is fair to say that what happened in the five days in Fort Kochi took everyone by surprise for the rich insights we acquired by simply paying attention to the processes, opportunities and experiences of audience. The perceptual revelations reported by participants were made more compelling perhaps by the degree to which we could extend our own capacities to view without resorting to technology. At a time when museums and galleries tend to be caught up in adding screens and devices to enhance viewing experience, these low-key, accessible techniques that activate interpretive flows were startling for their simplicity and effectiveness. Instead of providing headset audio-visual guides that prevent audiences from sharing and interacting in the common spaces produced by artworks, an alternative approach might realign the ways we employ our senses and bodies to more actively participate in generating viewing experiences.

But where did this bring us? What did we find? How will it alter what we do next? To draw on Sundar Sarukkai's call for new frameworks, it feels as if this ongoing work to develop the project of *Exchange & Flow* as approach and paradigm, allowed us as a group to open closed boxes and spread out the contents. Exchange and flow is not a given, neither is it always self-evident. However, in that scope for play made available to us through our creative action as audience, we practised the freedom to interpret and mediate that is the particular responsibility of the arts to uphold and convey. It is this that we take forward.

Hannah Drayson and Joanna Griffin

The *Exchange & Flow* writing workshop

Photo essay

EX
CHANGE
&
FLOW

DAY ONE

Experiencing



“Imagine a box, and you open the lid and inside is the audience. What does it look like?”

HANNAH DRAYSON

On the first day Dr Hannah Drayson led a phenomenology workshop which provided techniques for turning attention to experience. It offered methods for revisiting remembered experience that drew on micro-phenomenology techniques and provided vocabularies that would shape into writing.



Introduction to the workshop by Dr Joanna Griffin (above). Interview activities and discussions during the phenomenology workshop led by Dr Hannah Drayson, in the Pavilion, Cabral Yard (below and following pages).









EX
CHANGE
&
FLOW

DAY TWO

Communicating



“Something is singing inside of me that is not me”

CHRISTOPHE BOYER

The second day took place in the Aspinwall galleries. The aim of this day was to heighten viewing experiences through four workshops that explored non-written forms. Christophe Boyer led a voice improvisation workshop, Murielle Ikareth led a movement workshop, Jacqui Knight led a photo essay workshop and Udit Parekh led a drawing workshop.





Movement workshop led by Murielle Ikareth in Aspinwall galleries. From left to right: Murielle Ikareth, Celina Basra, Ananya Rajoo, Sahaj Umang Singh Bhatia.





From top left clockwise: Udit Parekh's drawing workshop, Jacqui Knight presents 'Museum Fatigue' a photo essay about audience postures from 1916, Shaista Banu presents her photo essay about Biennale workers, Christophe Boyer's voice improvisation workshop. Overleaf: the movement and photo essay workshops.



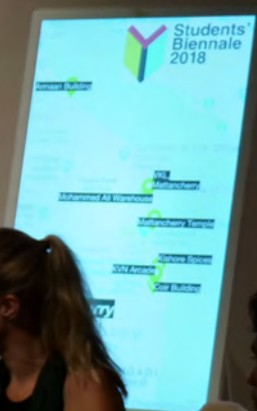




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EX
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DAY THREE

Participating



“...when people around whisper in an unspoken agreement to respect the dark, the sole camera person has no such apprehension and continues to click as loudly as ever...”

SEEMA MASSOT

The third day was open to the public and provided an opportunity for the core participants to develop their ideas with an extended group of writers. The day culminated with an improvised spoken word performance in the Pavilion.





EX
CHANGE
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FLOW

DAY FOUR

Translating



“What about when the audience is violent also? This is a question I want to ask. Audiences can be very violent, very discriminatory, very prejudiced. There are many ways of perceiving.”

ROHANA JEYARAJ

The fourth day was devoted to reflecting on how to translate the workshop experiences to other audience-led contexts beyond the Biennale. Hannah Drayson, Jacqui Knight and Joanna Griffin led tutorial discussions in Pepper House Library. Through the workshop partnership with Leonardo journal, Sundar Sarukkai then led a discussion of challenges faced by writers from India.









- 1) What is your concern? Address it...
- 2) Why is it important now? Why?
- 3) Where is this going? It...





EX
CHANGE
&
FLOW

DAY FIVE

Evaluating



“What is the work we have to do as audience in order to become audience?”

SUNDAR SARUKKAI

The final day aimed to evaluate and amplify the transferability of the workshop. It was led by four invited special guests whose role in the workshop was to indicate where insights might be lead and lamp the way toward future endeavours.

Mark-Paul Meyer, Senior Curator at the Eye Film Institute Netherlands,

Dr Jahnavi Phalkey, Director of Science Gallery Bengaluru,

Professor Sundar Sarukkai, Philosopher of Science

Professor Ashoke Chatterjee, former Director of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad





Mark Paul Meyer

Senior Curator, EYE Film Institute Netherlands

Exchange and Flow drew on a major European research project funded by HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) that Eye Film Institute was closely involved in. Mark-Paul Meyer talked about its influence on their collection strategies, and the importance of knowing what audiences value.

“The HERA project was really the reverse, it was - what could the curators, what could the researchers learn from the audiences.”



Mark Paul Meyer: EYE is a merger of several institutions and the biggest one was the Dutch Film Museum. We opened a new building in 2012 where we have four cinemas and a large exhibition space and that is our public face. Then we also have a large archive. It's a film archive that documents Dutch film culture, which is very international because Holland is a very small country, and a large part of the films shown in Holland are from abroad. So our film collection is about twenty percent Dutch.

When I say archive, the problem already starts because 'archive' is a very complicated concept. When we speak about archives, and read the literature on archives we often think of archives that are created by authorities as instruments to control information and to control law, control also power. What we find here in Kochi is that the Dutch people who came here destroyed the archives of the Portuguese and then the British came and destroyed the archives of the Dutch. There is already here in Kochi quite a history of archives, I understand. A film archive is a very strange thing because it's never conceived as an archive that would contain all the information and all the films that are part of film history. Most of them started in the thirties, like BFI and Museum of Modern Art and the French film archive and in Holland it started in the forties. They all started out of cinephilia in a way, people who were aware that films were disappearing and that it was worthwhile keeping those films.

So film archives are arbitrary collections with multiple narratives. There is for instance a narrative in the archive that is absolutely absent in all the film books and that you only can discover when you go into the archive and you open the cans and you see what is there. And then you will find there are many films made over the years you will never find in film history books. So you can even rewrite film history by accessing the films that are in the archives. This is something we have been stimulating a lot in the past years. And also because that's a way of creating and developing your narratives. Just collecting everything that is there, that is not so difficult, but then deciding on what to keep or on what narrative you find is relevant, that is important, because preservation is very costly. In the old days you used to have to copy them to other film material and nowadays you are digitising them.

Because of the expensive preservation process you have to be careful about deciding what you keep and what you will not keep. Incomplete material that you cannot identify may be a problem. You will find lots of material from the teens and from the twenties and you have no idea what it is and then you have to decide what to do with it. And usually archives will say that's incomplete, let's ignore it. One thing that's special about the EYE film museum is that it started in the early nineties to preserve the most fascinating and beautiful unidentified fragments in a series called Bits and Pieces. We have now about fourteen hours of these very diverse fragments and they are very popular among programmers, students and researchers.

EYE is interested in exploring the archive in alternative ways. One is of course done by the curators themselves by the people that work in the archive. We develop ideas like Bits and Pieces and other ideas and we develop practices that allow access to the archive in other ways. We are interested then also in collaborations with people from outside. Artists important to us. Filmmakers that want to explore the archive searching for certain topics, certain footage. Sometimes people stay for a long while in the archive and they investigate what is there. Gustav Deutsch, a very famous Austrian filmmaker who makes compilation and found footage films, he was investigating phenomenology of early cinema so he stayed really for a long time in the archive looking at material and from that he developed the concept of his film.

These collaborations give new ideas about what is there in the archive that gives the archive new meanings. We also have scholars in residence. What's true of artists is also true of academic research. Academic researchers they often stay outside at their university. They come every now and then to the archive to see what they want to see. However, really being immersed in the archive, being part of the archive is a different experience and creates new research questions and new research is also something that we want to stimulate. A third thing that is very important is to give the public, the audience, the visitors to the film museum an opportunity to work with the archive and to see what is there. This is what happened during the HERA project that we did six years ago already. It was the reverse mode you could say of what is usual in a film museum or a museum in general. There the curators create the stories and then those stories are exposed

to the audience. The audience is learning from the curators. The HERA project was really the reverse, it was really what could the curators, what could the researchers learn from the audiences. And then we saw that when audiences are confronted with footage from their youths, or even from their parent's generation, that they can tell stories and give an informed reflection.

The HERA project, for instance, focused on advertising films and there were a lot of people who knew the advertising films from the experience they had in their youth: Adverts they had seen on the television in the 60s and the 70s. Having people working with those materials gave – you could call it a 'Madeleine' effect from Proust. If you had this little cake in your mouth or you smell a certain scent from your youth, you live the experience of those days again. That was happening a lot during those few days in Amsterdam at the Advertising the Sublime event, where the audience was encountering the archive. During those days we also invited a number of collectors from outside of the archive to present what they had. A film collection is nice, but there are lots of other collections that are relevant and there is often no museum for those collections. There was somebody who collected soap. She collected an enormous amount of soap. It was not only the shape of the soap but also it was the smell and the colour that give you a certain experience. There was someone who collected plastic handbags. All kinds of things that you could collect people presented here and you could talk to them. And that is one of the issues of the archive. That an archive is always associated with criteria and classification of materials, and there are many classifications and many criteria that do not cover the materials that are out there, or even are there in the archive.

If you just stick to your classifications that you had when you started making your archive, then you will ignore a lot of what is there in your archive. So the challenge is really to discover all those materials, all those film elements that are in danger of being forgotten, but that are worthwhile and interesting to be viewed and to be kept.

Dr Jahnavi Phalkey

Director, Science Gallery Bengaluru

For the past year as Director of the new Science Gallery Bengaluru, Dr Jahnavi Phalkey has been putting into practice a fresh vision for an audience-led engagement with science. With the gallery still under construction, she spoke of her approach to reflective and interpretive museum-based encounters with scientific processes of knowledge-making.

“...this is about people bringing their energies in order to do things that they want to do and ask the questions that they want to ask of science and of knowledge-making...”



Jahnvi Phalkey: I'm a historian of science by training and the Founding Director of Science Gallery Bengaluru. It is a project that started over a year ago for me, but the Science Gallery as a concept started out eleven years ago at Trinity College Dublin.

To my mind, what visitors to the Science Gallery should get from us is the ability to think about science, rather than be presented with science itself: we would like them to understand better what the place and space of science in society is. Rather than throwing more science at people, I think this is the perspective that the general audience needs, perhaps so do some practitioners of science! This thought has been strongly on my mind as I've considered how we might design the physical space and programming at the gallery.

We are about process. Colleagues working in museums have already talked in great detail about this. What do we mean by process? I think the gallery should become a place where people can come in, in order to explore the process of knowledge making. This is not a place to view finished products. We will not have a machine for you to click a few buttons and then say "ok , I understand this is gravity". We are simply not about unchanging interactive stuff, we are about the process through which you explore, the doing of science.

This is not a space, therefore, where you can come in for an hour and leave. This is a space where you will come, stay and then keep coming back again and again and again. At the same time, and because of that, we are about collaboration and about long-term learning.

Cultural institutions in general are moving away from the passive broadcasting models where you put up the best exhibition you can and expect people to come and do what they want with it, then you evaluate their responses, and then you change things to address their responses, etc. At the gallery, we want to go beyond that. We want to move beyond interactive because interactive is still shaped by what we think the audience should experience. What we want to do is to not set the agenda, but rather to leave the opportunity open for the visitor and audiences to create experiences and agendas that they want to explore. This is, therefore, not about us producing something that people engage with, but this is about people bringing their energies in order to do things that they want to do, ask questions that they want to ask of science, of knowledge making, and we will make the provisions to realise their inquiries.

It is interesting that to many people on the table where I am sitting today, the epiphanic moment was realising you are yourself the audience and I think that is the moment we want people to have in the gallery which is that we can be, irrespective of our career choices, our own audience in science.

So, what will we do?

We'll have a range of things happening at the gallery. We'll have exhibitions and events and learning programmes. It is critical that people connect with peers and experts at the same time. What I do want to emphasise here is that the connections are made not just beyond disciplinary boundaries of physics, biology, between the sciences so to speak, but beyond career boundaries. So as a historian of science, which is what I am, I should feel absolutely comfortable walking into the lab or the studio or the theatre and talking to people with other interests.

It is a space for co-creation, that's a precondition.

Education especially in India is all about competition. It is in fact about almost nothing but competition - exams, grades, clear this exam, don't have 99% you can't become a doctor or an engineer or an accountant no matter what you really want to do or be. It is incredibly destructive of the intellectual capabilities of everybody, especially those little people who at age four or five begin to watch out for that they do better or worse than the little kid sitting next to them rather than actually doing something with the kid, breaking something down, building something, doing nothing....

For our programmes, for our orientation programmes, I do not wish to offer certificates for anybody doing anything. Come, spend time at the gallery with your interests, with others, create interesting ways of validating, rather than evaluating your own effort and that of others around you. It is not going down well I can tell you that much, everybody wants a certificate!

Are you liking all of this? (laughter] Good.

So, what will the building complex be? We have six experimental spaces: a wet lab, a workshop, a theory lab, a new media lab, a food lab and a black box theatre. The learning spaces are about learning by doing. If I can have my way, the lab spaces will be open 24/7.

Ours is a post-graduate level generalist wet lab, a workshop area for wood, metal, plastics and new materials modeled on the Institute of Making at UCL, a theory lab, a food lab, which is attached to our cafeteria. The food lab will allow us to collectively and thoughtfully explore the food cycle. If you like sugary drinks that's perhaps not the place to go! We'll have a new media lab attached to a black box theatre. For those of you who are interested in new media art, you may have heard of 'deep space' at Ars Electronica. What we will have is a studio that makes 'deep space' possible; there's no point making a stable AR-VR space to bring people in and let them just feel some wonder and then leave. What we have is a lab and a studio to make the experience possible for general audiences but just as important are the experiments that make those experiences. The black box theatre is otherwise open for performances, films, and perhaps the study of kinetics, who knows...

We also have residencies. We are a small building complex, so at any given time about three people - six if you are willing to share - can live on campus and be working on site on projects.

We have an indoor café, an outdoor café, a rooftop café, - food and drink as we all know brings people together - and a gift shop of course, because while we are a non-profit public institution, we still have to watch out for where some of our revenue is likely to come in from.

I have just told you about our learning spaces, which are targeted at the fifteen to twenty-five-year age group. We also have spaces for the general visitor. First and foremost, we have an activity space for the general visitor as well. Our general visitor irrespective of age will also be able to do things with their hands - some of it guided, and some of it more open-ended. We have exhibition galleries. Our exhibitions are assembled through an Open Call, so the curatorial voice is not as strong as say in an art gallery. We'll also have a reading room with books, Jenga, Lego, Meccano, board games, white boards, whatever, basically a space to sit, read and think. Part of the reading room will change for every exhibition so you can explore the topic in more detail and hopefully get interested enough to start using the learning spaces on your own.

So much about the building. I call it the fish bowl model, which is where effectively the visitor to the gallery is not only seeing the exhibition. The lab spaces and the exhibition spaces are not physically separated at all. So when you are going through the exhibition, you simply have glass walls between the labs and the visitors and you are actually able to see what's happening behind there, and hopefully realise that doing anything with your hands is a noisy process, that there's always a mess, there's going to be some smell, some grease. Things aren't like they are in a museum which is absolutely sanitised, physically de-contextualised, no different from an art gallery: you never get to see how things are made although occasionally you might get the historical context at least.

Our target audience is fifteen to twenty-five-year olds - not very young, not very old - our learning programmes are tightly messaged for that age group. Of course, anybody can come to the exhibition galleries and all other open spaces.

What I hope will eventually begin to happen in the learning spaces are research fellowships that run from one to five years where you decide I want to do this project, where some team says we want to experiment with x-y-z . Just as well, a historian or social scientist should be able to come in and ask to find out what sensors are, or it could be someone saying may I use this space for the next six months to do an experiment. This is not the same as a regular research fellowship we see today, you cannot do anything here unless you are crossing boundaries, or a group of scientists, artists, humanists and social scientists, engineers working together.

In sum, our objective is to create a public institution that scripts science back into culture and create the avenues for people to experience science in action. Our building opens in 2021 – in the meanwhile, we will begin to engage with our audiences through our first exhibition on water called “Submerge” starting 15 December 2019.

Prof Sundar Sarukkai

Philosopher of Science

Professor Sundar Sarukkai spoke of the ethics of theorising about another's experience, which is the subject of his two most recent books. It is an issue that surfaces when artists develop subject matter from outside their own experience, when academics attempt to read cultural contexts and in the sometimes fanatical drive in India to develop 'scientific temper'.

“The problem with the scientific temper in India is speaking on behalf of others“



Sundar Sarukkai: When I was walking through the exhibits of the Biennale I found something that struck me, which I'm sure many of you might also have noticed. There are an inordinate number of exhibits which in their description refer to the Kerala floods and these are from people who are not participant in the Kerala floods, in the sense of people who actually lived through it, but who are in some sense invoking it. If you want to be very critical you could say in some sense appropriating it. I'm not going to be critical but rather to try to understand them as artists who are trying to place their artwork within another theme, not just of the Biennale, but also of something which happened in Kerala.

There are so many of them which talk about the Kerala floods who are interpreting elements as artworks, in terms of the Kerala floods and also about marginalisation, because in a sense this Biennale unlike the last one is a lot about protests of various kinds. A very activist kind of art is being presented to us. If you remember the last one which Sudarshan Shetty had curated he was, I would say without reducing it to any specific category, it was far more conceptual, there was far more engagement with questions of thought. I think both of these are very important ways of curating, but somebody may ask the question, why are we speaking on behalf of people whose experience we didn't share?

So I want to begin this question of experience from that. In what sense do I speak? What is it that the artist wants to do when he or she connects that particular kind of a creative output to a particular kind of a social reality that happened? In other words, what is the meaning of somebody producing any work of art on which the experience itself is not the basis of the creation of the artwork? It goes back to a very important question about experience. My own struggles with the question of experience came when Gopal Guru, who is one of our very important political scientist and philosophers and is now editor of EPW [*Economic & Political Weekly*], wrote a piece in EPW many years back on why Indian social science is not democratic, not egalitarian. The central core of his argument was why is it that non-Dalits present Dalit life? Why is it that most of the social science about Dalits and the marginalised is written by upper class social scientists in India? It raised a very different kind of response to the question whom should be writing about whom. My own debate on this began when I wrote a response to that piece pointing out what is so special to Gopal's argument. That became a book called *The Cracked Mirror* and now we have another book following that called *Experience, Caste and the Everyday Social* in which we try to understand the nature of experience and its connection to our own understanding of the social.

I raise this point because of two things. One, the very category of experience. When we go and see these artworks and talk about experience you have to ask a very fundamental question, what makes you think it is your experience, what gives you the guarantee that what you are actually seeing and quote "experiencing" is actually yours? What is this "yourness" or "mineness" about my experience? And two, therefore, it relates to this tendency to use experience to appropriate others. I'll come to the question of experience but the talking about others, which is a very fundamental ethical issue, is to me a very core central question that goes back to what Jahnvi was talking about: the question of scientific temper.

Very briefly, without getting into this large debate, which many of us have been having for so many years on the question of scientific temper, the one story I wanted to tell after Jahnvi's talk was this. A prominent proponent of scientific temper once told us about the attempt by a small group of scientists to get people to support a pledge to follow scientific temper in their lives. He went on to say that this attempt failed, ironically, because they couldn't get scientists themselves to sign such a pledge! This is indicative of a major problem with the idea of scientific temper: that for many scientists, neither in their daily lives, nor in the practice of everyday science, is this idealized and politicized notion of scientific temper found.

There's a very important point about scientific temper and invoking scientific temper to exclude people who we say don't have scientific temper. That would be my most worrisome point about scientific temper. Because no other country has used this term that India has used. The term has been used to create a distinction between a particular elite and a so-called ordinary people who don't possess this. What we have not given them is democratic access to science and that democratic access to science can only come by doing, not by intellectualising science in a particular way.

The problem with the scientific temper debate in India is this question of experience: Speaking on behalf of others, rather than understanding science as a different kind of an activity in which we participate. Those are the exclusionary mechanisms to keep people out. The fact that there is nothing called scientific temper that is not present in our best scientific institutes should make us ask what is it that you then want people to have which our very well funded, 7th pay commission, AC room scientists have? What is the difference? What is it you would want them to have that these people don't have as scientists? We have used this term to keep out people in order to represent their experience, in order to say, "You guys don't get it, you don't have certain kinds of capacities. We know about it and we can represent that experience."

This goes back to the question of experience and who can have this experience. When Gopal wrote this point on why is it that the non-marginalised write about the marginalised and represent them in very many ways, there was a lot criticism and push back. Can I only write about myself? Do I not have the capacity to write about anything else? So it goes back to the question of what is this "my-ness" of experience? If you have an experience, how much of it is really yours? And how much of it is actually not yours? That you are just an agent, a conduit for somebody else's creation of an experience.

This was an example which I used in that response to make this distinction and show why the point Gopal was making was important. Bangalore has a Halli Mane restaurant. It translates as 'village house' literally, but basically it was a restaurant that was suppose to give you rural food. Consumerism of rural food, some people call it poverty tourism. This was basically foods like ragi. These restaurants came up with this idea so you could experience what people in the village experience. What is the difference between eating rural food in the restaurant compared to the experience of a person who is living in that situation every day? You make experience itself a transactional commodity. It's a commodification of experience. I can take your experience – what is it to be somebody like you – and package it and sell it to someone else so they can also share in that experience. Commodification of experience is very much what we search for when we go for experiences. If you want adventure, you'll go for a three-day trip where they take you right from Bangalore to just that place where you will have breathing trouble in Leh, Ladakh. But before anything serious happens they'll bring you back by helicopter or plane or whatever, so you can go stay in these air conditioned tents where you are suppose to live like a shepherd. What is it to commodify this village experience of eating food that in villages they supposedly eat? The difference between the real north Karnataka village and me is if I don't like that roti then I can tell them get me butter kulcha. The person in north Karnataka has no choice to order butter kulcha if he or she doesn't like it, but eats what is there.

That immersion in the experience out of which you cannot come out of, that question of necessity which characterises experiences, is what defines what I discuss as the lived experience. We can all share experience. We can all participate in different kinds experiences but there is a core of certain experiences which whatever you do you cannot share in it because, lived experience is defined by

what you cannot get out of, not how you can sympathise, empathise, understand, cognitively make sense of your experience etc.

This becomes a very important reason why experience is a most important category for feminism, caste studies, gender studies etc., because people who are non-Dalits may be very sympathetic. They may say, look I understand this question. Yet the difference between participant observation, sitting with a community and dressing like them, is still not enough to be like them. That gap is still there. For the anthropologist, if things don't go well she can just walk out, go back to the University, whereas the people who live there have no such choice. This therefore raises a fundamental ethical question of experience of who can talk about it and who can experience it.

Prof Ashoke Chatterjee

Former Director, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad

As the architect of the iconic Ahmedabad Declaration on Industrial Design for Development, Professor Ashoke Chatterjee recalled the attention it focused on the user and the absorption of its recommendations into founding design principles. Invoking its spirit, he drew together insights from the Exchange & Flow workshop, to create a first draft Kochi Declaration for Audiences.

“Could we have a Biennale like this in Ahmedabad, I think the answer would be no. If the answer is no, we have a real problem.”



Joanna Griffin: I'm going to ask Professor Ashoke Chatterjee who when he was Director of the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad coordinated something called the Ahmedabad Declaration on Design for Development. I wondered if you could say a bit about that because I was very fascinated by how a large constituency of people came to this agreement, which is very succinct, and I wondered whether we could try to make a first draft of a Kochi Declaration for Audiences.

Ashoke Chatterjee: The Ahmedabad Declaration was an effort, way back in 1979, in positioning design within the discourse on human development. It was at a time when the National Institute of Design, as the first institution of design teaching of its kind anywhere in what was then called the Third World, had received a degree of recognition from the international design bodies, whereas at home there was almost no understanding at all of what we were doing. Unlike today, design was not then an established profession. Design as a word which describes the profession as we understand it today did not exist then (or now!) in any of our myriad languages. Yet here we are, perhaps the only country in the world with an unbroken design history going back thousands of years and yet without a word for 'design' even though its culture is inherent in our civilization. So there were all kinds of dilemmas with introducing what emerged from the Bauhaus in post-World War I Germany to a country that was then putting together an agenda for nation-building.

The Declaration was an outcome of NID received from the international community for the quality of its work and above all for the pedagogy it had innovated – it was the first 'Third World' institution to start design education, and the first anywhere to offer it at the school-leavers' level. There was a sense that something was happening in India that may be relevant beyond India, beyond the so-called developing world, which the world could draw upon.

That was the era in the '70s when a lot of issues had come up about design relevance. There was a famous book by Victor Papanek called *Design for the Real World* which challenged what was happening in the West and foresaw the kind of culture of waste and greed which surrounds us today. It was thought that perhaps the international community should move to India to understand the context with which the NID experiment had taken place and see what could come out of such exchange.

When the conference was organised – and its organisation is also a long story – when they finally came to Ahmedabad, the keynote address was given by a wonderful man called Romesh Thapar. He was a journalist, a design thinker way ahead of his time, who had already done an exercise called Design for Living for a think-tank called the Club of Rome. His keynote address was on identity in modernisation: What are these processes of change which India is going through, and what does design have to do with its need for self-confidence, for avoiding mimicry, and perhaps for redefining what progress should actually mean for India?

Out of that came the context for the UNIDO–ICSID–India 79 Meeting. As discussions unfolded, the international community felt that we can't just end the conference with a record of discussions. Let's use the opportunity to put something together that can actually move into the UN system. So the Ahmedabad Declaration and the Major Recommendations that were made in its support was a document specifically intended to move into the UN system, at all its levels of decision-making, in order to sensitize the international community about design as a process, design as a means of empowerment, and for lifting the quality of life. Design, not understood as mere products but rather about what products and systems should represent. What was really interesting about that Declaration – remember it takes place in 1979 when terms like 'sustainability' had not yet evolved and the environmental movement was just starting – is that many things that emerged from the Conference foresaw what was going to happen at a much larger scale internationally. I think the really core achievement, if we had an achievement, was the concept of well-being: that progress has to be understood as well-being and well-being has somehow to be measured and evaluated as a quality of life. Statistics was not going to be enough, there had to be some other way of understanding progress, and somewhere in this process was the importance of design as a way of looking at the world, as a way of analysing the situations that people see around them and then as a capacity to resolve at least some of the problems that affect people.

So that context may be a bit different to what your objective has been here. What you might want to do, which would be similar to what happened in 1979, is ask the basic question that was with us at that time 'Where do we go from here?' To pick up on the presentations this morning, many people spoke of this problem of encouraging teamwork and getting out of silos. That was the experiment that India made through NID. Here was an education institution set up by the Government of India outside the university system with its impenetrable silos, without exams, without marks and focused on 'learning by doing'. Your work as a design student would be evaluated in real-life situations. People for whom, by the time you come

to your final year, you actually go to as Dinaz did and work with as real-life clients who decide whether you pass or fail. The irony was we could do all this because we were outside the Ministry of Education. The people who founded NID had a vision to bring it under what was then called the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Commerce and Industry left us alone. The Ministry of Education did not even recognise our diploma and the only reason they did not was that we didn't give marks and we didn't give grades. That was heresy and we were heretics to be kept away from the high tables of academe.

Where this might have some relevance to your concerns is that the NID community had to have the stamina for trial and error, and for failure. Until the first students came out of this experiment, there was no way of knowing what would happen. Parents had asked this question from the time their children joined: Will they get jobs? We didn't know. What is the designer? Nobody quite knew. 'Designer' for most was either a fine artist or an engineer. This in-between animal at NID was not understood. So a stamina for uncertainty and for failure relates I think to some of the experiences you've talked about today. Now there has been a kiss of death. The National Institute of Design has been recognized by an Act of Parliament as an Institute of National Importance and therefore can now give degrees. That is a welcome into the very system that we fought against. It may now swallow us up. I regret to say that design institutions, some of them very fine ones, may now be trapped because the freedom to experiment and to fail, the hallmarks of the past, may now be drifting away as university formalities come in. Can you employ a Faculty who does not have a PhD? Apparently not. Yet NID had great people on its faculty who hadn't finished school or college and yet were ranked among the greatest designers that this country has produced. You turn that tap off, and you call that progress?

But this is not just an Indian challenge. The 'dumbing down' of design education has taken place across the globe. It may have started in England through Margaret Thatcher's policy for self-reliant, earning institutions that could offer training for exportable skills, rather than education toward analytical thinking which great educators had innovated. So to my mind what you can draw from that experience is this:

What finally is the value for which this country needs to build some kind of consensus?

What would encourage things like the Biennale to flourish, not just in Cochin but all over? Could we have a Biennale like this in Ahmedabad? I think the answer would be no. If the answer is no, we have a real problem. The need is for this kind of freedom of expression and thought to be spread, through the arts. Is there a consensus on its value? If you try to put the audience as the centre of concern, which I think is what you have been trying to do, is there something as a principle or a value that we should hang on to, one that doesn't lock us into a single position but allows other things to happen, to be felt or thought about? And then, Who needs to do what in order to take this forward?

Evaluation discussion

The Kochi Declaration for Audiences

Extract from discussion

Ashoke Chatterjee: In what you have gone through in the past days what are the values and challenges that have come to the surface?

Sahaj Umang Singh Bhatia: This is something I wrote before this, but it really applies to this question. The audience is not just eyes, but whole bodies, not static objects/humans but dynamic beings with lived experiences constantly creating new versions of artworks constantly appended by their own experiences.

AC: So you're talking about individuals as audience, each of them being respected as creators of an experience.

Sahaj: Or co-conspirators in the experience of the artwork.

AC: So the viewer as a co-creator, co-conspirator, is that it?

Sahaj: That was coming from Sundar's talk, what is "our", what is "you", what is "I"? Every person that walks into the space where the artwork is presented, whatever it is performance, text, anything that is a kind of appendage to the artwork itself.

AC: What else? Post-truth narratives in art circles? Donald Trump is back in our midst, is he? [comment inaudible] Is it a question?

Siyad Bin Sayid: No, no I observed, there is an increased importance for subjective reality and personal experiences which appeal to the emotions of people rather than a standardised experience.

AC: Rejection of standardised responses toward the integrity of a personal experience. Would that be right? The only thing I'm not sure about is where post-truth comes in but I suppose you assume that if there is a structured response that becomes a kind of a truth, that you are rejecting.

Siyad: Yes

Celina Baljeet Basra: First, that we are implicated in the audience from the beginning this has been very important. Then, the fact that we can be authors of our experience and changing the way we perceive with certain techniques that we learnt, like the micro-phenomenology, or the movement, or the singing that we can also connect in our experience by experiencing something in these techniques together. So we can be authors together, but also moving away from the idea of authorships, one question was: Can we think of experience as cascading? So maybe it's not about ownership of experience. And then be vocal about experience, this is something that you wrote [to group]. And also unlearning what we think we know especially in an art context, to look more at what the audience knows – so all of us.

AC: You're talking about experience as a process in motion that doesn't stop at any particular point.

Celina: You can sum it up like that

AC: I'm trying to find out what you meant. Are you talking about the audience as a collective or as the individual?

Celina: It can be both, that's the point. It can be both you as an author of your experience, in my opinion, but also as a collective experience that can connect.

AC: So experience as something that is in motion, moving, not ending at any one particular point. So it's almost an act of co-creation.

Celina: Co-creation is a good word to use. There are different layers to it.

AC: Which brings in its own responsibilities perhaps, and values with it. Any others?

Soorya S. Shenoy: So this is a question. Does the complexity of the curatorial note defeat the whole purpose of inclusivity?

AC: Meaning what?

Soorya: I'm talking about the complexity of language used in the curatorial note. So a normal person, I would use 'normal person', it's so difficult to understand what the curator is trying to say.

AC: I'm that normal person, I could not understand and I spent a lot of my time trying to...

Soorya: Even me!

AC: I asked several young people whether they had understood it. I didn't find a single person yesterday who had understood any curatorial note in any hall I had visited. One person, I think he said he was a chemistry student, said to me,

"Why are you wasting time, it's all rubbish," I said, "Did you enjoy what you consider rubbish?" and he said, "Oh yes, this is my third trip." So I thought that was pretty good, he was completely liberated from the rubbish he was talking about and had come back here three times.

Sahaj: I think that relates to structured responses, because that also is a way of imposing a structured response, you are coming in here and you are supposed to feel this.

Soorya: By curator I'm talking about the blurbs that are written, the labels.

Jahnvi Phalkey: I'm with the rubbish! Curators who don't know what they are doing put it in a language most people don't know.

AC: Until I bumped into that chemistry student yesterday I had a real inferiority complex. , I thought 'Here I am at eighty-three, and there's no time left to learn!'

Sahaj: It sounds like a justification sometimes.

Soorya: If its not complex its not art.

AC: The point that you're making is does scholarship provide a kind of constraint to the viewer's ability to make up her own mind?

Shaista Banu: Also what I feel it does is that when you complicate the language you are excluding people who would otherwise have understood it, you are making them feel its something that is beyond your understanding.

AC: Maybe scholars do that, right?

Shaista: This is very pertinent because the Biennale has gone all out in several ways, in its agenda of inclusion, in the smallest things that it has done, you can see that there is certain ideology that reflects. But how much does it translate and how much is disparity normalised that you can't even perceive the kind of disparity and there's such a huge gap that needs to be bridged when you're actually talking about inclusion.

AC: So the question then is who is the exhibit for anyway?

Shaista: It could be.

Samira: We want to make a note. This is the table's response, that also, when in the workshop for example or creating collaborative spaces where we can all share our responses, we were thinking about how that can become slightly fraught and gendered, When audiences are sharing their responses, how does it work in a shared space? We keep talking about coming from the point of view of an audience, so I think our point would be reflecting on spaces of sharing as also being fraught terrain, and not just the artwork. The presentation of artworks creates spaces of sharing which audiences also negotiate.

AC: Creating spaces of sharing and discussion.

Samira Bose: And maybe thinking of that as also fraught terrain.

Diksha Gupta: Social hierarchies play out in spaces of sharing.

AC: Could we have your response?

Sundar Sarukkai: I'm just a little bit worried listening to some of these comments because it looks like an audience should have an immediate birthright to make sense of some artwork [agreement]. What is the work you need to get out of an audience? To rephrase in Jahnvi's context, if you are showing let's say some theory on relativity and then you write a small paragraph about space-time curvature with $E=MC^2$ somebody will say it's all complex and you're excluding people. But that is the point about complex writing. It does exclude, I'm not denying the point, but here we think we have an immediate transparent right towards the idea. The artist is also struggling. The curator is also struggling, maybe. Why I'm saying this, especially in the context of science, is if I write an equation, we think, "Oh, that's complexity, people won't understand, it's ok." But art is like that. Maybe some parts you are seeing is like a very complex theory of relativity experiment. The artist is also struggling to say what it could be. We need to be a little more charitable and ask the more important question which is: What is the work we have to do as an audience before we become an audience? And that we can probably think about.

AC: That's very important, but is there a responsibility on the audience's side to be better informed? To be more open when they go into a space? One footnote to my experience yesterday in Aspinwall was that I was told that if you could read Malayalam you would be better off because the Malayalam text is much easier to understand. I don't know if that's correct.

Jo Simons: I want to respond to the idea that we're making it too difficult for people because that's very close to dumbing-down everything and I find it quite patronising that somebody won't understand the words in a curatorial note, because we all have dictionaries or we can all learn what a word means, but not

necessarily today. It can take time and I don't want to make a new category of 'poor impoverished people' that 'won't get it'. I think that's just creating prejudices.

AC: The value that comes through is that there is a responsibility from all the stakeholders in such a situation to at least put themselves in other people's shoes and be prepared for issues that may arise. I think it's valid even if there are no simple answers to that challenge.

Jo: Can I just add to that, in the context of this Biennale there's a huge team of very approachable volunteers and mediators. People may not all take advantage of it, but there are a huge number of people – someone at the gate, someone at the desk saying, "Did you have a nice time?" There's always an opportunity to step up and say I didn't get it, I didn't understand the art work and then as you said "Oh me also" and that itself is opening the space for us to share 'not knowing'.

AC: You are also underlining the importance of having these mediators who can assist, but when you are going on from the Biennale, taking the lessons of the Biennale to other places maybe this is something one should keep in mind, when you provide a space for public discourse then to have people there who can be interpreters, mediators, facilitators in some way becomes useful.

Jo: Ask questions – that simple invitation, like we have here.

Sahaj: We might have a limitation, in *Metropolis* [artist: Lubna Chowdhary] if you enter the room the mediator says just sit on the chair, you have to sit here. You enter the space and there is that huge, long glass box and the person says sit here. If you just have a chair there, bolted down at either end, one might just explore there and sit on the chair because it's there. That's where design comes in to the picture, someone sees the chair and they sit here and they see the artwork in another light. Mediators obviously are important if you have questions, clarifications but they have to be instigating experiences rather than narrowing down or boxing it in.

AC: I assume the organisers are facilitating the experience by suggesting that you sit down. Nobody that I saw yesterday was being told what to do or where to sit but what did impress me was that in one of the exhibits there was complete silence. Something was going on in that room that I felt was very, very important. The one where there is remembrance of those whose voices are suppressed, where people have been in prison [artist: Shilpa Gupta *For, In Your Tongue, I Cannot Fit*]. Complete silence. And you got the feeling that whoever was in that room was absorbing something profound. It was very interesting just to watch. Everyone seemed to quieten down. Everyone seemed to want to pause and to reflect. That seemed an incredible achievement, to get people to pause, not to rush. An attendant came to say that they were closing. He came three times and only then and very slowly people left. They left very quietly. To me that was a huge achievement because something had clearly taken place which would remain with the people who had gone out. As a design experience it was quite interesting. So what we've got here is the importance of mediation and interpretation.

Annalisa Mansukhani: So in response to the question of mediation, I think one way that we as Foundation members of the Biennale designed the mediation programme was to move beyond plain instruction. To create a dangling tidbit of

information for someone to grasp onto and then take it further. If someone is telling you to sit on a chair, you don't have to follow it. You can engage with the idea of the chair and then move beyond it. But also to summarise our project, noting down what we thought of as values, a few of the thoughts that came out were the idea of collaborative progress over personal progress and ambiguity as an enabler of progress.

AC: Can I just ask, when you say progress what do you mean? I can see the importance of collaboration and ambiguity, but when you say progress what is the concept you have in mind? Progress as movement towards what?

Rohana Jeyaraj: It was actually a reference to what Miss Jahnvai was speaking about when we are very fixed up on individual achievements and certificates, things like that, so this workshop was a way in which we worked together as a group and we were able to learn far more.

AC: So collaboration and individuality as new ways of establishing what progress should mean. Is this the progress we are talking about? I don't think progress is quite the right word then. I know what you mean and that's why I use the reference to what happened in design pedagogy. You eliminated competition and said that it's not a matter of how many marks you get – it's a matter of what is the best you can do in order to serve somebody else's needs

Dinaz Kalwachwala: Process would be a better word.

AC: Process, yes. Any other things you want to add to this list? We've got quite a long list now.

Annalisa: Also the idea of ambiguity as an enabler of process wherein you're allowed to be indulgent, in that notion, and the notion of accessibility of creating or enabling a space for translation. Letting go of preconceptions and engaging with changes and also the risk of letting go any prior knowledge, or prior conceived identity.

AC: Who should be letting go – the artist or the audience?

Annalisa: Audience.

AC: The audience should let go of preconceptions and move into spaces with an open mind.

Jo: But also us as the participants we didn't move ourselves into batches of scientists, artists, Biennale team, MFA, MPhil, PhD. We didn't have much time. We had to just meet each other as participants we didn't have name badges of who had more knowledge than someone else.

AC: A culture of a more level playing field.

Hannah: Can I just note how that hides hierarchies.

Jo: That they are existing.

Hannah: I'd say that they are still there. It just takes longer to notice them, which can be interesting and can level things out for a while.

Celina: I just wanted to connect that comment back to the unlearning element. Because unlearning is basically letting go of preconceived ideas by the audience, by all of us, by also the people who write the curatorial note, by the whole team of the Biennale. Unlearning is something we all have to do democratically. And going back to the complexity of the curatorial note, this is not necessarily something

that cannot be generally said of all curators. You have to let go of this idea that it is 'them' all the curators who just put a concept in there. There are a lot of curatorial concepts that factor in the audience and I think that the curatorial note I read here for the Biennale in Kochi is exactly that. I have to say in my experience, comparing it to the Berlin Biennale for instance – far more complicated, really nobody understood it not even people working at the Biennale! So I think there are really differences. When I arrived here that it's not just through a notice on the wall, but through dialogue, through impulses that are given. Its always different if you talk to someone if you have a person in front of you than just a text you read. The ambiguity is very important I feel, but not just for the way we look at art or we behave as audiences but also in the artwork itself, in the artist's intentions. Where is the artist in that conversation because we're talking about a lot of contemporary artists, living artists, so where is the space where curators, the team of an exhibition, the mediators, the audiences and the artists come together? Ambiguity in the artwork is exactly what opens up to the viewer and emancipates the viewer. If the artwork is just going one way, just has one dimension that's bad art to me. That doesn't leave openness at all to enter.

AC: I think what you mean is respect for the curatorial task. And also to not view this as making things easier. Rather making experience accessible by raising the right questions. I have a newspaper report with me and I think it helped me enjoy the Biennale much more than anything I read on the walls yesterday. The report helped me walk around intelligently, not feel alienated, and it gave me a real sense of this extraordinary achievement. To my mind what also makes the Kochi experience so special is its framework of a democratic society. That's also something people should absorb as they're going through the Biennale, that this is really what a democratic society is all about. Everything doesn't have to be simple and you don't have to agree with everything. You can walk out of something if you want. The whole climate of respect for diversity of opinion and approach to me is the most powerful message of the Biennale.

Seema Massot: I feel that the Biennale has created more physical space for art, they've made more room for art, and maybe a proposal could be to make room for diverse audience experience without having a functional expectation of an audience response. I think that sums up a lot of things that we've been saying.

Jahnvi Phalkey: Just a footnote, I'll build on what Sundar said and I think you are absolutely right, just as there might be something in science that is not necessarily easily accessible to somebody, there is very well something in art that is not easily accessible to everybody. I am completely willing to accept, not that my willingness should matter...but to accept ambiguity or even a difficulty in an artist's expression. I am not willing to accept that in a curatorial note because we've seen in the last thirty, forty years what the curatorial profession has done. It has created art markets, it has created taste, it has created investment, it has created a range of things including what should count as art and what should not count as art. In a sense, a certification. All generalisations work only at the level of generalisation, of course we know that, but I think collectively the curatorial profession has created a problem that it needs to confront directly and address.

I think that has a very direct relationship to who we consider as audiences and therefore what responsibility we accept of audiences as well in this collective experience of what art is and I think in our case what art, science, humanities coming together is. Who said it? You only said it [Sundar]. What is the work of the audience? When you come in, what are you expecting? How are you mentally prepared? How do you create the intellectual ability? This is the work of larger society, this relates to what you are able to teach or not teach in schools. This is about what kind of atmosphere you are able or not able to create in families, so in a sense it's a larger collective understanding of what you should be as citizens, as participants in a democratic society.

AC: There is a very important point that you've just made – that this process has to start in education.

Jahnavi: Yes, oh god it does, yes!

AC: Its part of citizenship if you like, our responsibility as citizens in a democratic society to be able to understand the role of arts as a mirror of society, as looking at the world and expressing a view which then enriches us whether one agrees with it or not. That stimulus for thinking is important. Certainly you might say that curators, art scholars may act as responsible gatekeepers.

Jahnavi: Yes they do.

AC: But what you are also saying is that gate-keeping should become a phenomenon that encourages inclusivity.

Joanna: Thank you so much Professor Ashoke Chatterjee for orchestrating this discussion at the end of our workshop, which feels like the beginning of a significant new phase in our understanding of exchange and flow!

New writing, reflections & proposals

Hamsini Harihan

How to spot a rainbow at a Biennale

A reflection on 'Catch a Rainbow II' by Tamsuanger Longkumer

- Step 1:** Hear the mist.
Wonder if the mango showers have come early.
Go out to meet it.
- Step 2:** Let the petrichor fill up your lungs
Adopt it for your own perfume.
- Step 3:** Observe children pulling in adults who call out to their friends and family.
Watch their faces light up.
- Step 4:** (substitutable for step 3)
Run to it.
Let the mist fall on your hair and face and arms and legs.
Let the clothes on your stomach feel damp.
- Step 5:** Close your eyes for a second.
Let it sink in.
- Step 6:** Search for rainbows in the sky.
Look down.
Spot as many as you can.
- Step 7:** Jump in a puddle.
Smile at a stranger.
Make new friends.
Take a picture.
Laugh.
- Step 8:** When you exit, remember to send a postcard home.
Your parents will want to know about this.

Anushka Jasraj

Five-card Tarot Reading for Kochi Biennale 2018

I shuffle the card casino-style, and cut the deck. I hold the deck in my right hand and pick three cards with my left hand. Someone once told me the unconscious is connected to the left side of the body, which is why you should pick tarot cards with your left hand. I'm not sure whether I believed her, but I like the specificity it adds to the ritual.

Card 1:

The Chariot

A card that often represents travel, or moving forward with speed. I took a flight from Bombay to Kochi. The airplane captain announced landing and said, remember to save your work before closing your laptop. The beginning of a five-day journey. Sometimes, the cards are obvious.

Card 2:

The Tower

Our writing workshop meets at the Pavilion, which is more like an umbrella than a tower. This card often represents disruption, sudden change, and things outside of the querent's control. On the second day of the journey, Murielle leads us in a movement improvisation workshop. We improvise movement as and how and when we feel like it. The impulse seems to arrive from outside of us, from the textures of Priya Ravish Mehra's tapestries at Aspin Wall.

Card 3:

The Nine of Cups

Nine overflowing cups suggests excess. An excess of: artworks to absorb, prawn curry with appams, new friendships, words written in notebooks, time limits exceeded, mosquitoes and heat, chai breaks, visits to Shilpa Gupta's 100 jailed poets installation, and pictures taken of the biennale's animal visitors: a cat and a handful of goats.

Card 4:

The Three of Swords

A card that could indicate heartbreak, but the swords represent ideas and communication. Our writing proposals: a difficult process of articulating ideas. Channeling emotion into words. I present my idea to the group: I'd like to write about tarot reading. Would you ever deliver bad news when you read someone's cards, Jacqui asked. I thought about it, and decided I probably would not.

Card 5:

The Hanged Man

This card represents a period of stillness, and waiting. The journey comes to an end, and we pause to reorient ourselves after the shake-up of The Tower, the excess of the Cups, the strenuous Three of Swords. A man hangs upside down, and nothing seems to be happening, but stillness is not vacancy. An interior shift in perspective has occurred.

Rupsa Kundu

A conversation in a coffee shop

Priyam: *Did you smell the salt in the air?*

Sabita: *Yes, it was uncomfortable in the beginning but slowly made an adjustment with my senses...*

Priyam: *Sometimes it is so overwhelming!*

Sabita: *And extremely vivid! Now I can almost smell it from my memory and then so many pictures are rushing through my head – the sunset on the beach, the half-dead turtle in hands of the tourists, the boats and then the fisherman who explained his fishing techniques to me by drawing on the sand with his fingers...*

Priyam: *I guess I will remember Kochi by this smell.*

Sabita: *It is so surprising that an entire city can be captured through this tiny phenomenon!*

Priyam: (smiles) *I think that's how memory works...*

Priyam and Sabita are childhood friends, they live in the same city yet these days, and they barely see each other. It is once in a while they wave at each other on social media and send occasional messages with congratulatory wishes, react with emojis in their pictures or write a comment below. It has been a long time since the long conversations they used to have sitting on the English department staircase, exchanging the same cigarette.

Soon after college, Priyam married and later joined a kindergarten school as an art teacher. Sabita, on the other hand, pursued her dream as a performer and set up a dance theatre group in the city of Kolkata.

This time when Sabita posted a few pictures of her visiting the Kochi Biennale, Priyam commented she was also there on a short trip with her family.

The two friends finally met in a coffee shop at the Princess Street.

Behind them, Swaminathan (an art writer and critique) was sitting alone with a cup of coffee. He found that little too sweet for himself.

After a while of awkward silence...

Sabita: *So, are you here for the Biennale?*

Priyam: *No, not really. We planned a trip to Kerala and then heard about it. I spend a lot of time with the kids, and then thought, why not spend some time with the grown-up art!*

(laugh together)

Sabita: *Are you saying it's adult?*

Priyam: *No not in that sense but I hardly understood any of it, I didn't have much time to read all the concept notes. But it's not that I disliked it as well. I don't know how to put it in words.*

Sabita: *Hmmm. Sometimes when I perform, I do it to understand something by myself and then express through my body. I don't know if that's enough or whether I can convey it to the audience. I feel it is something that you first do for yourself. You experience something – a feeling, an incident, and a sight and then you feel an urge to express that by your own means. In that case, maybe I am my first audience. I don't know if I am making any sense!*

Priyam: *No no... I think you are right. When I am teaching, I get unexpected things from the kids. If you look closely sometimes it's not childish at all. They observe and sense their surroundings with much greater details than us. Yesterday I took my son to the children's workshop in the Cabral Yard and I loved the idea of that space...*

Sabita: *Isn't it going throughout the Biennale time?*

Priyam: *Yes. It's almost an open-air space where children are coming with their parents, playing with colours, creating collages, making clay figurines. It's free, collaborative and filled with creative energy.*

Sabita: *You are speaking about it with so much excitement! (smiles)*

Priyam: *Yes I am. When I am working as an art teacher in a private school, at times it feels so restricted – measured period of time, a given syllabus, a closed space and most of all, the competitive environment. On the other hand, I spent an entire day cutting, shaping and sticking colourful papers with my son. I loved being involved in that 'useless' activity. I enjoyed it every bit as my five years old son.*

Sabita: *I guess it's the sense of freedom and involvement that matters a lot when we experience art. A closed-end or preconception might hamper such a feeling. Sometimes when we encounter a "serious" work of art we deliberately try to fit into a given meaning, narrative, etc., which might hamper our immediate feeling about it. If we can ignore the hierarchy of "serious art" for some time, I think we might feel otherwise.*

Priyam: (laughs) *True...*

Swaminathan overheard a part of their conversation. When the two friends got up for a little cigarette break, they noticed the middle-aged man behind them, scribbling in a black notebook. Swaminathan was trying to write something for his review column in a Bangalore daily but even after spending a lot of time in the Biennale he was unable to come up with something. At this point, he was thinking about the couple in the William Kentridge exhibition and how they had joined the procession of silhouette figures by dancing along while he had been busy analysing that. Swaminathan had found his feet to be too critical to dance!

Several thoughts were playing a little rapid-fire game inside his head. One question was deriving from another instead of an answer. So, the next moment he thought about the contextual works – in such cases isn't the experience incomplete without the knowledge of the context? What is the case of the uninformed audience?

Meanwhile, the two friends were back on their table and Swaminathan's thoughts got lost in their conversation. The shop was mostly empty so the owner didn't mind these customers spending a little more time over a cup of coffee.

Priyam: *Let's talk about you. It's a shame that I couldn't manage to visit any of your performances lately! But I saw the new poster you shared, it seems like it is politically quite charged.*

Sabita: *Yes, you can say that. As I was saying, in most of the cases my immediate situation inspires me but in that case that inspiration is not necessarily a feel-good one. I feel right now standing in our geographical context certain things are becoming unavoidable and it is not only political but also social and as well as environmental. Where in one hand globalization brought all sorts of information on our fingertips but it has also produced certain insensitivity within us. We get news of disasters, murders, violence, abuse every day from all around the world but we are prone to escape that harsh face of reality as human beings. You can say as an artist, performer, whatever you say, I feel responsible, and my works are a certain kind of outcome of such sense of responsibility.*

Priyam: *So you are saying art is not always something to feel good about?*

Sabita: *Maybe right now it's more of a something to just feel...*

Priyam: (smiles) *That makes me wonder about Priya Ravish Mehra's work. I was really intrigued by the abstract forms of rifukari.¹ The delicacy of the works is bound to catch a lot of attention. Also having been brought up in an Indian middle-class family I guess this is something we can identify and with the identification all sorts of images tend to come in my head.*

1. A particular way of mending torn clothes.

The first thing I saw was a random glimpse of my childhood in school uniform and that's the garment, which was prone to tear every now and then. Then I saw my grandma...

(takes a pause)

When I talk about it now I can connect those images with one another. My grandma used to repair most of my torn clothes with the same intricacy.

Sabita: That's what I was trying to say. It's hard to identify such feelings as happy, sorrowful or as good or bad but I think the experience lies in the part of feeling, sensing something or visiting a few unexplored corners in our mind where we usually do not pay a visit.

Priyam: To me it seems that we are most likely to associate with our past experience, knowledge or memory when we find something familiar in a work of art.

Sabita: Yeah that's the general tendency but I think even difficulty to read may create a memory as well. You said there are quite a few works you didn't quite understand. Maybe that's because you are not familiar with it's language or the signs it uses but the memory of visiting it might stay in your brain beyond your awareness and it might be triggered much later when you experience something related to it in your life.

Priyam: Sorry. I didn't understand that quite well.

Sabita: Actually, even I never gave it many thoughts before. But a recent incident left me quite surprised about it. When I choreographed my last piece, it turned out to be something we usually don't expect from a dance performance. Rather it was non-narrative and I mostly composed it through abstract body movements, which is hardly something like a dance. First I used to perform it alone and later modified it a little and included two more dancers in it. As I was creating it from my own experience I wanted the other dancers to understand or interpret the movements in their own way. So, after a few primary rehearsals, I sat with the two girls and had a little chat. They said they got the tension and sensed certain restlessness in the drama. One of them said a few movements recalled some disturbing images from her own past all over again but separately most of the moves didn't create a meaning to them and they were simply performing those as any other dance moves.

To be honest I wasn't quite satisfied with these answers and felt it's an injustice to my piece. But after a few months when we had already performed it over five times, one of the girls said she had started to create some more meaning for herself from the moves. She said she feels more sensitive to certain things around us that she wasn't before. So I guess a meaning can occur even much later you see something, and might not be so immediate.

Priyam: *So, there's the artist's own experience behind a work and the later audience may connect it with their previous experiences and create a meaning for themselves or it can happen later – the memory of a work of art might contribute to a future experience as well... Seems like in this case it is hard to define which came first – the chicken or the egg...* (they both laughed)

Swaminathan ordered another cup of coffee and a hot cheese croissant with it but this time he requested the attendant to make it less sugary. His notebook was left open in front of him but the pen was kept aside. It is quite unintended; he became involved in the two friends' conversation. At this point, he was thinking of the installation by Tamsu Yang Longkumer, which he visited earlier today. He could hear the people cheering and laughing. The reaction was of spontaneous joy and pure bliss as they found a rainbow in a hot summer afternoon. He thought of it as a reaction of immediate participation by getting under the huge structure of the water sprinkler, creating a rainbow around each person present there, produces a cohesive identity as temporary as a sight of a rainbow...

No, Swaminathan never thought of him as an audience before. He had spent a prolonged period of time writing and talking about art. It is an aptitude, developed through special academic discipline, set him with an ease of articulation. Swaminathan could connect historical references, use of style, movements, ideologies while looking at a work of art and then he thought of its curatorial orientation, the process of making or methods of display. Yes, it was all in his grasp and now it was his part of the responsibility to articulate it. But it is his ability or responsibility that had drawn an invisible line between the author and the 'audience'.

Over a cup of coffee, it was quite unknowingly the two friends made Swaminathan stand in front of a long lost part of his identity. He knew it is not easy to cross the boundary and step into the collective entity of audience...

It was quite suddenly Swaminathan decided to get up. So, he closed his notebook and put it in his side bag with a few other necessary items and walked towards the counter. He paid the bill and exchanged a little goodbye gesture with the shopkeeper and the sound of the conversation faded as he walked away.

Swaminathan felt light when he stepped out in the street. He could feel the breeze coming from the sea and started walking towards the nearby beach. He looked at the sunlight changing colours pouring into the darkness of the evening but there was some time left till the sunset. A long quiet pause was all he needed. Swaminathan had a feeling that a new journey awaited him afterward...

Harshada Desai

Time Telling

Every morning, some people begin their day with a personalised sound of their alarm clock. Some may want to wake up as if it is an emergency, as if sleeping has become a dangerous thing, so they carefully select a shrill sound on their phone alarm. While many others are undisciplined snoozers, who simply tap the snooze button on their digital alarm clock again and again.

While strolling in a store, looking for nothing in particular, I came across a shelf. This shelf displayed only one type of analogue alarm clock - all black with two bells. I stared at an alarm clock right in front of my eyes and noticed a hammer sticking straight out of the body between the two bells. This sight immediately set off a shrill reminder of the sound these alarms make. This is when I first realised my phone's inability to evoke any sense of urgency in the morning.

The clock sat on two shiny metal stubby legs, staring back at me. It had a very round face that was covered with a round glass held by a black sheet metal rim. The face had all the 12 numbers printed flat in silver. Immediately, I wondered if I could still read time. Vaguely, I remembered a day in school when we were taught to read the time with the use of simple black and white diagrams. That day was my first memory of feeling grown up because I could read a syntax that ordered all busy adults' life.

As I tested my ability to read time (the analogue way), I noticed I did not really look at any of the numbers. The printed numbers on the clock were placed 1 to 12, clockwise with four points marked between each number. There is no actual need for all 12 numbers, in fact there is no need for 12, 3, 6 or 9 to be printed either. The absence of numbers would not be a hindrance in interpreting the time, simply because the splitting of the 24 hours day into 12 hour cycles, and splitting these 12 hours in four halves are the basic discursive assumption for interpreting the indicated time. This is the first important rule of interpreting time on an analogue clock.

The second crucial feature that enables this clock to be a time telling machine are the three grey hands stretching out to greet the hours, minutes and the seconds indicators. The position of the short hand indicates the hour. This hand indicates inaccurately because it seldom points directly to the number, it sits annoyingly either just above or just below. The long hand that indicates minutes is better articulated than the short hand because it points with greater precision. The third hand is different; it is the longest and while the hour and minute hands appear to sit still, as if it was their sole purpose not to be caught moving, this hand tirelessly moves clockwise, counting seconds.

Altogether, this clock allowed me to interpret time, although universal in its phenomena, according to my individual sense of time. The digital clock on our phones, that we keep checking during intervals of boredom, dictates time. There are no hands to interpret, here the numbers are crucial. 7:01 (for example) can only mean 7:01, whereas on an analogue clock depending on one's individual interpretation of the hands could also mean 7:02. Digital devices have not only made time absolute, but also dictates more than just our waking habits.

Rewind, to the time before I entered the shop. I had finished work at 4:32, this I remember because I clicked the button on the side of my phone to flash the

time. Once I registered the time, I had closed my screen and put the phone back in my right coat pocket. It was winter in Delhi and the weather app had notified that sunset today would be at 5:00pm. As I left the office building, I opened Google Maps to give me an estimate on how much time it would take me to walk to the nearest metro station; 6 mins, if I followed the route it suggested. I kept walking on the suggested route and opened WhatsApp to update my husband of my whereabouts. I noticed that the last message exchanged between us was at 3:01pm, then at 3:03pm and last one at 3:05pm. I assumed he must have had a busy hour at work. Soon after I had finished messaging I scrolled through Facebook, where I read an update from a friend posted 11 mins ago, an article by Better India posted 2 hrs ago etc. In about 2 minutes I felt as if I had caught up on the world's and friends' events so I switched back to WhatsApp and replied to all the messages because I knew they were all waiting. We are always waiting for replies. I got to the metro station and took the escalator one level underground, went through security and reached the platform where an LED display suspended from the ceiling informed me that the next train was in 2 minutes. Once I was inside the metro, the Delhi Metro App notified me of the time it would take to reach my destination station. When I got off the metro, I opened Google Maps to inquire if it would be quicker for me to walk or take an automobile to the shop I was headed to. The road was going to take longer, but I was tired so I opened Uber app. There seemed to be many taxis near me, not more than two minutes away. I booked an Uber, a box above the taxi on my screen notified me of the time it would take for it to reach me. I got into the taxi, the maps on the app kept a track of how far away I was, in time, from my end destination. I got out of the taxi and into the shop, I checked my phone once again to check notifications. One of the notifications indicated the phone had 12% battery left which meant I could use it for no more than 15 minutes.

Digital devices and all digital information have a “hygiene” feature known as timestamps, usually indicated below the name of the author. This means we are interacting with multiple indicators of time. These time indicators along with our experience, memory, intuition or body time are now the basis on which we make our daily and future plans. The analog clock on your bedside would have rung a shrill alarm to wake you up at a time decided by you. Now we have apps that drive our alarms to calculate our hours of sleep and wake us up when it decides it is appropriate. It is through such merging of the digital and the real realm that our concept of time is changing and thus the analog clock is now redundant.

Ultimately, the clock's smooth, black and round face reminded me of a black and white Mickey Mouse hand puppet my sister had as a child. Though I never got to play with, the familiarity and nostalgia was convincing enough to buy it for a novel experience.

Asmita Sarkar

Outside and inside of Kochi Biennale

As I take a ferry to enter Fort Kochi (the picturesque part of the main town of Kochi) the landscape changes gradually. This is a much older part of the city, bound by backwater of Arabian Sea. This area is linked by some bridges and regular ferry services to the newer and more populated part of the city. Old buildings and traditional architectural facades bearing its rich multicultural past seemed to make an apt backdrop for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. As I hop from venue to venue something striking begins to emerge. The art-works and how these are occupying the physical space add new layer of meaning. Social inclusion and activism is the central theme of this year's Biennale. Many of the artworks blend in the background of the town of Fort Kochi, since many artists have used everyday objects, found images and footage in their art-works. At the centre of Aspinwall House which is the main venues in the Biennale, a canteen run by a marginalized 'untouchable' community has popped up. Not only is it one of the exhibits but here audience became part of the art-work because they can cook in the canteen, eat, and share. Torn up cloths, books and other everyday objects that bear evidence of devastating floods or gender and caste related violence occupy space next to exquisitely skillful drawings and sculptures. The more invented and deliberate artworks in the Biennale are also commentaries on socio-political issues. Artworks from different continents stand side by side giving the audience glimpses of the fusion of universal and regional concerns.

On my way to Aspinwall House I see posters and graffiti specially created for the Biennale, pop up on the wayside. These seem almost indistinguishable from the political graffiti and popular film posters that are common sights everywhere in Indian metros. Having some acquaintance with contemporary art worlds, I am familiar with the feminist and activist works of Guerilla Girls. Some of their propaganda posters pasted on the road side walls catches my eye. Guerilla Girls have a dedicated room in Aspinwall House, where their posters along with LCD displays are nicely framed and mounted on the walls of a well-lit white cube. In between the road side posters and the display in the white cube, more of their art-works can be found on the walls of the Aspinwall courtyard. This very conscious way of positioning the works inside and outside of the white cube is a subtle commentary on the exclusivity of the art-world

and this year's Biennale's explicit aim of inclusivity. Many would say it is a utopian aim. White cubes are there, so are well framed paintings, drawings and sculptural works on well-lit and strategically positioned plinth. There are sound sculptures and video projections in insulated dark rooms. In between the white cubes there lie art cafes and libraries, scattered books on feminism, queer theory, Marxism. The air is heavy with smell of condiments, spices, and local curry. One can hear chatter about travel, food and fashion. Local people go about their everyday life. Some are part of the Biennale but many are not. I came here to visit a contemporary art event and wanted to visit venues and exhibit that house them, but the nondescript spaces existing between the galleries and in the corridors disrupt the whole expectation of viewing artworks as distinct objects and displays. It is hard not to miss the curator's intention of keeping the boundaries of white cubes open. Even then I remained conscious of the fact that something is still being framed. The large factory and go down complex named Anand Warehouse houses young Indian artist Pravakar Pachpute's works depicting struggle of the coal-miners and other working class people in India. The room opposite features large-scale woodcut-prints portraying farmers and farmland. These are made by a Malayasian art collective. The display continues outside of the two rooms in the sea-facing backyard of the warehouse. Bits and pieces of cloths bearing print work by the collective flutter in the gentle sea-breeze. The port which is the life line of fishermen and traders of Kochi lies very close. One can see cargo ships and small ferries floating by the bay from the backyard. Indeed the locality of the Biennale is pleasantly framed by the Arabian Sea and its back-water. The venue becomes an artwork on its own, detached from everyday life of sociopolitical and economic turmoil of India and the world in general. Puzzlingly these are the same problems and issues being dealt in the Biennale. Here complex stories of social inequalities, exclusion, man-made disasters are being narrated though an extraordinarily optimistic spirit aiming to challenge status quo. When one is inside the Biennale, outside world seems uninteresting and homogenous. It is difficult to decide which one is more complex and tells more stories. We live with many problems and concerns in our complex modern life and these otherwise normalized experiences find a different contextual meaning within the beautiful pavilions. The boundary of this Biennale is not an impenetrable wall. Stories and spectacles from the outside enter the inside. But it is not borderless either. In that case there would not be any biennale of contemporary art. Without a real or conceptual frame there would not be any works of art that deserve writing about. If the frame is an insular white cube the works displayed inside can become problematic or irrelevant. But for this Biennale the way it is organized keeps the audience guessing whether what lies inside or what is lying outside is the real work of art.

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Rohana Jeyaraj

Having lived in Fort Kochi over the past few months owing to my association with the Kochi Biennale Foundation, there are multiple observations that I had made with respect to the widespread presence of art in the city, and also the impact it had on the collective psyche of its residents. What I had observed was a stark contradiction to the observations I had made on the city that I had spent my formative years in - Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Coimbatore is a leader in the industrial sector but has little to no artistic involvement. The economy of the city is mainly fueled by technology, textiles, and engineering.

Owing to this, I always found it hard to explain to people that I was working in the arts. People would find it difficult to wrap their heads around the idea of pursuing a full-time career in the arts, *per se*. Noticing that the arts in Coimbatore were fairly uncharted territory, in late 2018, St+art India, a non-profit organization that works on art projects in public areas attempted to pervade this space. They had selected four to five prominent buildings in busy localities of the city, and painted large murals, over their walls. This indeed did garner a lot of attention due to the conspicuous presence of the art, and the evocative/sensitive nature of some of the topics that the art presented, without a filter (colonialism and exploitation, the working class, urban disconnect with agriculture, the trans-community, etc.)

To me, this was the start of something. A very interesting possibility, and one that gave rise to multiple questions. How is this being received? Has it broadened the people's conception of what art can be, or is it still limited and closeted? Is it just curiosity that the murals have kindled, or has there been some dissemination of thought? Is the response positive or nonchalant? Is this the first step to easing the people out of their bourgeois, capitalist-driven mindset and into a more conscious, sentient one?

My experience at the 'Exchange & Flow Workshop', and the activities we partook in helped me revisit these questions that I had, and prompted me to investigate the premise of contemporary art in an industrially-dominant city, further.

Jo Simons

Finding my voice

I have lived and worked in Asia for nine years fascinated by all I cannot ever know. I have documented, written stories and formed, stronger than I am always comfortable with, opinions that are still simmering, waiting to be developed, refined, edited and ultimately shared.

I am a Kochi Biennale fan. I am married to an artist whose home town is, of course, Kochi. For several years I have been schooled on every possible who, what, why, when and where of the background to this remarkable, much loved event. My partner has a lot of history, loyal friends and sworn enemies in this game. In short, for me to love this show, be fascinated and hold the curator in high regard, was treading old songlines.

Two years ago, along with many other women, I was literally dancing and whooping with joy that the bold, much needed, inevitable and perfectly timed decision to appoint a woman artist to be the curator of the 4th Edition had been confirmed. I could not then explain exactly why it felt such a landmark beacon of hope. I am still immersed in finding words to fit the changing and evolving cultural landscape: a landscape that is having to collapse the traditional Men's Club paradigm and shift towards the integration of the remarkable women artists, writers, cultural theorists, film makers, photographers and scholars who have been hugely under represented and sidelined for far too long.

The KMB 4th Edition curated by Anita Dube rolled into town more slowly than expected due to the calamitous floods that devastated Kerala during the Monsoon of 2018. There was without doubt resistance from many fronts to Anita Dube's appointment: she was a woman, she would be representing the Delhi perspective, she was this, she was that, she was not enough this, not enough that ... I must state the obvious: that mostly this was nonsense, personal projection, old snarky ghosts, nay-saying and as they say in India, "Time Pass."

I attended the opening ceremony, which is a flag hoisting ritual that takes place in the central garden of Aspinwall House. Anita looked radiant in rip-roaring red and the official 108 days of art introspection and criticism was officially handed

over from the hushed secrecy of two years planning to us, the eager demanding-to-be-satisfied public, the Biennale audience, to make of it whatever we would.

A moment that stands out most in my mind and touched my heart, was walking across the grounds and meeting the curator who was, without her entourage, just simply a very quiet, elegant lady. My partner and I were able to shake hands with her and say, "We wish you every success." There was a nakedness to this that struck a chord and remained a valid imprint as I spent the following three months exploring this labyrinthine show, with its multiple metaphors, hinted at histories and fabricated futures.

Contemporary Art often confounds. Art historians, artists and the public stand at this constantly beguiling new threshold wondering what to think, what to feel, what to say and what to experience. Perhaps we are never entirely certain if we are being deceived. Are we being invited to play and experiment or to refute and denounce? Should we revert back to familiar and safe romantic water colours or the absolutist cultural heritage of temple art, to reject, morally police or elevate the story of now? Are we equipped to allow artists to express their years of practice in whichever way is meaningful to them, or are we needing art to stay strictly within the already drawn lines taught to us in school, college, museum and gallery exhibitions adhering to strict well defined genres? Do we feel enraged at the deception of art created by nameless faceless fabricators and, artisans working on a daily wage in the background, whilst an artist reaches meteoric status for work they have not actually created with their own time or talent? Are we curious to know how what we have been taught to think and believe has been fabricated? And can we relax into the vast possibility of designing new futures, tricking and deceiving our stuck scholarly mindsets into experimenting with new ways of seeing?

In an extremely conservative male led art world, can an accomplished art historian be a woman? Can successful male curators respect a woman curator? Is it possible in a social climate dominated by religious models of right and wrong that queer sexuality can be regarded, without hesitation and judgement, as equally relevant to non queer representation? Before we reject queerness, do we even know what it is?

The curatorial invited us to explore alienation, marginalisation, fragmented humanity, civil discourse, friendship and the whispered ideal of equality. Your Bienalle, My Bienalle, Our Bienalle, suggested, this was NOT her Bienalle, their Bienalle, and the experiment offered was to establish or verify the truthfulness of such an ideal.

What if we could only achieve insight if we actually participated in and tried new things? How bold a curator that declares in full certainty, "You will learn absolutely nothing new if you do not experience new things." The architectural artwork *A Place Beyond Belief* by Nathan Coley, emblazoned in lights upon the dark blue night sky, was the perfect reminder as it beckoned us to keep noticing our beliefs and prejudices, or at least recognise their existence.

The work of Santha KV, a multi stranded, textile rope installation, repeatedly reminded me that there are many beginnings in art movements and many epoch-

defining artists, and whilst they certainly lead somewhere it is not always clearly defined where this somewhere is. Many of the strands of this artwork lay scattered in a graceful heap on the ground, and I do wonder if this is not the perfect metaphor for the show; an impeccable emblem of historical accuracies in Indian art trajectories, including a nod to Krishnakumar, founder of the Radical Movement, pioneering performance art, Modernism, early digital and video art, and the future not yet told. I read this again and again as an invitation to young and future artists to do your own thing, follow your path, and see where it leads.

#Metoo, The Guerilla Girls, a fifty percent representation of women artists, such ideas are certainly ruffling a lot of feathers in what is a historically male bastion community. There is a history here of hundreds of years of spice trade, seafaring families and slavery, and a few centuries later a hybrid Marxism that amazingly completely forgot to include women. There is a song of the Kerala people, a slave song, a workers' song, an unlost identity, deep in the heart of old fisherman.

I wandered the back streets of Jew Town, perched on window ledges, spellbound by traditional Kerala procession bands. I met the legendary Vietnam War photographer Nick Ut and was mesmerized by the haunting photojournalism that depicted the tragedy of the war in Yemen. I am not sure I can commit to a favourite work of art; it seems churlish to try to select one work out of so many. My 'top ten' list keeps turning into twelve, or fourteen, or twenty-four, and then I remember the stunning, elegant and intricate Nilima Sheik mural and I have to re-jostle my other delightful choices.

The atmosphere of participation was palpable. Talks, lectures, poetry, a workshop providing art classes for the entire programme, cafes, visiting artists, Student Biennale, 'walk thru' ancient relic warehouses, late night discussions, parties and film screenings ran for 108 days, and without doubt the feeling of inclusion made it a very different cultural space to any previous Biennales I had visited.

The Exchange & Flow programme hit my social media feed and I wanted to share it with our online community immediately. It seemed so relevant. There was an aching gap of young brave art-writers with fresh perspectives – the old bastion's anger and criticism was unrelenting and they were not likely to yield their readership anytime soon. We were just starting to sense a change in the air. The curious case of women curating shows and running large scale cultural events such as Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa and the programme could only be a positive thing to incubate new voices. I was not looking to position myself in the marketplace as a Western, already opinioned, voice with the inherent insensitivity of yet another imposter claiming to understand India. I was, I realized, desperately homesick. I wanted my Western thought process back, to speak and think in whole sentences and to be heard and understood without apology. I wanted to hear English voices and to reconnect with humour and wit and to spend a few days without misunderstanding. I applied, chased up my application and made contact with a human, not an automated reply! I was really ready to be selected and explore an entirely new, never before tried, five working days in a dedicated writing conclave.

It was an amazing space, there are moments that still make me smile that make little sense, but captured the heart and essence of British creativity that I had yearned for. In an introductory process in small groups on the first day I completely blanked out the instructions. I had been debating with myself did they mean Cricket the game, or did they mean Cricket the creature? Lost in my own little world, facing my two earnest, stranger colleagues, I shared my dilemma. The ice-breaker moment where this awkward, slightly dysfunctional, human mumbles, “Hello, nice to meet you, my name is Jo,” brought me firmly into the present moment, yet another moment of, “Yes, I am in!”

I was tempted to join the voice workshop, and actually queued to join the painting group, but in a moment of truth knew neither of these were actually where I wanted to be. I joined the movement group and it was another coming home, hello and welcome to my estranged good self. We moved, we danced, we laughed until we became hysterical. We celebrated the who-ness of ourselves and each-other dancing, shape making, stretching, playing in space, in three separate exhibition spaces. We asked, “Are there unconventional ways to enjoy an art space?” We explored this – Yes!– and the most incredible part of it was the permission we gave ourselves to do so.

In one of the project research groups a participant had mentioned tarot reading and across the table was a conversation about an octopus. It became this vividly hilarious moment where Jacqui juxtaposed the two conversations and created the possibility of a tarot-reading octopus, and yes, weeks later this still makes me laugh out loud. Thanks Jacqui for that, and for instantly recalibrating my soul, travel adventure and struggles and finding my North Pole.

A lot of our writing workshop was a ‘no writing’ kind of experience. Instead, there was a lot of sharing, exchanging ideas, and listening; an unusually respectful and kind listening, less common in everyday life. Art and ‘audiencing art’ raised many more questions than it established answers. I found myself again, after many years, back in an academic enquiry in which there is a language and a structural way to approach not only Art, but all enquiry, and perhaps, reframing understanding too.

I am still reflecting on my experience of being amongst disciplined, committed writers and researchers. It would take years to research and do justice to the themes that feel most pertinent. The two key related aspects that I am compelled to consider are firstly, how do ordinary audiences of art and the artist community experience art and voice themselves? And concurrent with this question is the vast, bigger consideration: what are the permissions and restrictions that arise, socially, educational, and culturally, which of these are self-made and internal, and which are pre-set by art teachers, educators, critics, and society? Perhaps most importantly, which external factors can I/we willingly uphold or dismantle?

Exchanging some of my former rigid and rather defensive positions, and flowing with many new, more mature ideas, is a welcome transformation.

Soorya S. Shenoy

Me, My Mum and Guerrilla Girls

When it comes to difference of opinions, I guess a mother – daughter duo scores the best. When I gradually uncovered the layers of feminism during my college days, through classroom discussions, poetry and essays, I always made it a point to bring some of those discussions back to my home in Kerala. My mother is a lawyer by profession, has been working with a private bank for more than two decades, and has an excellent career graph. She is highly encouraging yet orthodox, like the people who say I can go to any corner of the world to study but marrying outside my community is a shame. The most common ground of disagreement for us is women's rights.

When I advocate for women's rights as a social movement, a breakthrough from the historic patriarchal societal structures, she looks at it as an individualistic problem which cannot be homogenised into a class. I realised the problem is when we break the collective lens. Only when we look at gender inequality as a larger social evil does it give rise to a cause of feminism. She does not see the society as a construct that has assigned certain roles to men and women, ostracising or mocking any movement from the 'straight' line. She does not see it as a construct at all. The point to ponder is, once we see a very common menace in Indian households like domestic violence, as a personal, individual problem, it loses its gravity. It becomes an affair between a couple which we, as a society, as outsiders, do not and cannot interfere in.

After some persuasion, she came with me to visit the exhibition by Guerrilla Girls at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2018.

We came out and started discussing the broad themes of the exhibition. There had been someone in the family who was beaten up by her husband, starved and abused almost every day. She had chosen not to lodge a complaint, despite support to do this from the rest of the family. She even cooked food for him the next day, letting go of all the pain and tears. My mother said, "some women decide to live with violence, almost voluntarily consenting to it, because they consider their

‘familial peace’ more important than the violence hurled against them. So they do not assert ‘their rights’ all the time. It is their choice”. But do we, as humans, voluntarily choose to be beaten up, sometimes and sadly, yes is the answer. What makes it alright for a fifty-year -old, well -educated woman to look at each problem of inequality from a narrow lens, a personal problem to be dealt with individually? Indoctrination, maybe.

This is not to negate the unfathomable amount of efforts my mother has put to help me grow as an individual. But there are some fundamental differences that exist, that we as two individuals can only try and discuss but might never reach a common ground. The work by Guerrilla Girls becomes extremely important as it brings to light the marginalised number of women artists at museums, some dark humour about women never reaching top positions, white male supremacy and so on. The bold black figures in their posters showed the number of one-person exhibitions by women at NYC museums changed from one to five, between 1985 – 2015. It spoke about the ‘F’ word Feminism for Future, to build a gender equal society, to iron out the differences that are quite evident in the society we live in. The exhibition was quite upfront, did not require any complex interpretations.

But, somehow it still couldn’t convince my mother at describing how grave a problem we are discussing right now. For her, gender equality is relevant only when everyone thinks through the same lens. When there are differences in the way people think, it is quite difficult to bring a homogenous sense of equality. When women as a class itself do not have a consensus when it comes to their rights, it is not possible to enforce a common rule of equality, is what she says.

We even spoke about consent, which is so poorly understood. I guess she was subtly talking about the infamous rape culture in India. The habit of victim shaming was so fierce, she said, it really does not matter if a woman walks with a man at night with consent or if she is kidnapped, because people are going to judge her the same way. It is so unfortunate, but this is the reality. I do not want to make my mum the mouthpiece of a larger society, but what she said is the attitude of a whole generation of people who are quite comfortable in shaming the victim and blaming the women all the time, instead of raising questions against the unsafe environment created by men for women.

We almost knew that we are like those lines, whose origins were the same, but then diverged to never meet again. She said I can become a leading lawyer in the country, nothing can really stop me. I can work for spreading literacy in our country and do whatever I want for the betterment of society. But to universalise the concept of equality and homogenise problems will not bring in any plausible solutions. This little chat with mum is not to say that the whole society’s thought process is similar. But it definitely was a small but significant opinion from a working woman.

How an art work by a feminist group like Guerrilla Girls could trigger discussions between me and my mum is what I was curious to note down. I believe that aspect is done but the questions this discussion has triggered will remain within me, maybe until I find the solutions myself.

Murielle Ikareth

It was such a happy surprise to be invited by Joanna Griffin for her workshop on 'What do audiences do with artworks?'. I love those last minutes spontaneous "You are welcome to join us if you like" kind of invitation! Here I am, arriving in Kochi from Kottayam, ready for a new creative adventure! The participants did not really know at which sauce they were going to be cooked...neither did I ! Since I knew the workshop was around writing, I imagine all participants struggling with their own mind and brain trying to find THE right word. So I decided to explain nothing! Not a word about what creative movement is about. I just said "Let's look with our body and see what will happen". There is no right or wrong, no obligation of any sort; you start to move whenever it comes, you stop whenever you want...

Off we went! In the first space we entered there were artworks on the walls, off the walls, framed or just hanged, paper, glass, cotton, textures.... Soon I started to move looking at one detail of an art work with lots of trade and rope like entangled, glued, colored, mingled... I saw one girl started to move slowly, first her hand, then her full body... I decided to follow her to encourage her daring move...another girl followed us and we had a cool time together before we somehow proceed someplace else. Soon we were all in movement, one way or the other, just a body part or more. Then I saw another girl slowly moving just her hand up and down in front of a frame. I came behind and started to follow the reflexion of our hands in the glass of the frame. I was so involved in our playful shadows, she slowly moved away and then I saw it: the art work ! I did not even notice it before!

There it was, magnificent, with all the details suddenly revealed to my eyes. It was as if my mind was simply completely absolutely focused on that artwork at that moment. What a feeling!

Maybe grace or contemplation, joy and gratitude for sure! It always amazes me to feel how powerful our body and mind connection can be!

Now, it is Kochi, it is hot, very hot, the group decided to continue the experimental moves watching a video which is in an air-conditioned room! Clever! We did not see time passed... coolness, darkness, togetherness, loneliness, movement, immobility, shades, images, text, words, sounds, songs, people

wondering if we are a part of the art work, sometimes joining us while passing by, softly hidden by the obscurity of the room...

I had such a wonderful time facilitating improvisation movement surrounded by contemporary art works. I could perceive how strongly our body in motion could affect our perception! How exploring different ways to be in space made us be a part of this environment instead of being outside of it. As a creative movement therapist I can guide the participants through experiences but I cannot do the work, it is completely up to the person, at that moment, to explore his or her own feeling. Being more present to one self also means be more present for others and our surroundings. So after brushing your teeth in the morning, move freely for 5 minutes and your day will be brighter!

Thank you so much Joanna and the participants for sharing this creative time together. Hope to meet you again, here or there ...

www.moveability.in

Sahaj Umang Singh Bhatia

Fragmented Eyeballs

If we start to think of audience as more than eyes, what insights emerge for the performer's audience?

The question that I came to the workshop with was first of all, what was the relationship between the artwork and audience and how was this relationship mediated through artefacts introduced by the exhibition, such as a gallery booklet, a curator's note, or a wall panel text?

In order to answer this, one had to first know what are the things that people initially see in an artwork, not just the whole thing, rather the smaller details that one observes, 'micro details', if you may. Then whether curatorial texts help in the experience of the artwork or cloud the potential of the work to spawn wonder in the audience. I was hoping to work in a group and understand how different people approach the same artwork, and how do they use the text to decode an artwork.

I was interested in question that the workshop posed: "What do audiences do with artworks"; and how this mediation between the artwork and the audience plays out especially in the realm of public art. Exhibitions and museums breed an audience that is somewhat prepared to 'see' an artwork, and also prepared to 'interpret' it a certain way, with the curatorial note being the portal that facilitates a certain enactment of the artwork itself, and in my opinion robs some audiences from their agency. Public Art on the other hand, apart from its own performance in the space it occupies, instigates a more fluid, and real experience from the audience and that creates more interesting outcomes of interpretation. What I was also hoping to explore is the 'performative' aspects of being an art-audience (the gallery/museum audience) and what separates them from the 'public'. Is there a certain way that one is expected to behave while watching/seeing artwork, and does that cage the audience's imagination, and in turn the artwork itself?

Another aspect that I specifically wanted to explore was the relationship of the audience vis a vis camera phones and artwork. If the advent of cameras changed

the relationship of how we ‘saw’, as elaborated by John Berger in his seminal tv series/book *Ways of Seeing*, then mobile cameras in hands of almost every person has altered that relationship to an unimaginable extent. How do different people photograph artworks, for personal documentation or aesthetic reasons and use them in the future, and what scope does it open up for the audience to give another layer to the artwork? These were the questions I came to Kochi with.

My previous work has been in the realm of third theatre where we try to overturn the dynamic of the performer-audience binary and involve the ‘audience’ as a performer as well. My practice in the past couple of years has been mostly the attempt to merge my theatre background (from college years) and my experience in documentary filmmaking, and doing live visuals for a rock band into something that transcends these well-defined categories. In my practice, I have tried to incorporate video, found objects, performance, using body as image, and various aspects of theatre, film and installation art to create my own expression.

Audience as co-conspirators (as owners of their experience)

What I learnt from the five days of the workshop is that the audience is more than just a pair of eyes, waiting to ‘see’ things/artwork; and that there are different approaches we can take with the ways of experiencing artworks.



Image source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pDE4VX_9Kk

Finding micro-details

On day three of the workshop, we went to the Biennale and did a series of exercises to explore this. We were a diverse group of audience, including a young student, a sailor, and a mother of a teenage daughter, plus two core participants. First exercise was to really familiarize the audience with getting closer to the artwork- physically and mentally. The idea was to break the static relation of

the audience gaze, and engage closer visually at first. For this, we asked the participants to take out their camera phones, and take extreme close-ups of the artwork, of 'micro-details' that they notice/ get excited by. The engineer-sailor saw equations within a big artwork with drapes and kept going through the different drapes till he found that they could be the equations of blouse making [Anoli Perera, *Left Behinder* (Tapestry Series) / 2018]

In the second exercise we went to another artwork and asked the participants imagine our fingers as eyes; and slowly incorporating movement tried to look through our 'ten eyes' and flowing through the different places in the artwork. The aim was to use the fingers to go as close as possible to the artwork, (without touching it of course) and bringing our 'ten eyes' closest to the micro-details that we wanted to explore. The artwork was a film being played over 8 channels spread across about 120 feet, and we had lots of room, following different images through our eyes and walking around [William Kentridge, *More Sweetly Play the Dance* / 2015].

This was a significant step in getting the participants to open up their bodies and shifting the act of interaction with the artwork from being a static gaze from the eyes (and the internal thought process of 'understanding'/'decoding' the work) to a more dynamic play of body, movement and multiple sensory perspectives vis a vis the artwork.

Mute spectators versus active participants

What we noticed through our own documentation of the participants was also that at first, their body language was closed: arms locked, standing straight and stiff, clutching onto a handbag and post the second exercise the body language was more open: hands freely on the side, maybe ready to react to the feelings. Further, in the conversations about the artwork and the experience, the responses of the participants were more honest and personal, spoken in a stream of consciousness; rather than a well constructed proclamation.

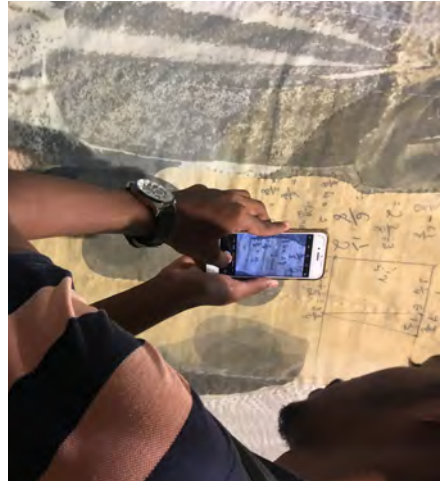
This marked for us a crucial realization, that a distinctive experience could be stimulated as easily and we could readily see results of it.

For the final part of the exercise we combined the first two exercises and asked the group to enter the space of an artwork and then take about five minutes to explore it, before making a thirty-second video with their smartphones as they move (fluidly) between the micro-details they wish to capture. The work gave us ample room to individually explore this, as it was spread across multiple rooms with many objects either hanging still, or videos, and kinetic pieces. [Marzi Farhana, *Ecocide and the Ride of Free Fall* / 2018] This was an exciting opportunity to make use of improvisational movement and the perspective of a mobile camera to get up close with an artwork and encounter a unique experience not readily discovered. Like the camera ('kino-eye') from Dziga Vertov's manifesto declares itself free "today and for ever from human immobility", the audience can today free itself from limited perspectives of seeing an artwork.

Further, it is a way of taking back the viewer's agency over the experience of a certain artwork. No longer one must compel to understand/seek meaning the way a curator's note asks you to, or how a newspaper reviews an exhibition.

Maybe one despises the artwork in its totality but through their micro experience creates something new, a new narrative, a new meaning or a new 'work' in itself. This opens other ways of engaging audience, not just thinking of audience as people who see things, but who also use bodies, hands and eyes (togetherness).

The approach that I would wish to take in regard to my own practice would be consciously think of enhancing the experience of the viewer/audience and take that relationship to a more dynamic play of participant/audience or rather a co-conspirator in the unraveling of experience from the artwork. This would mean that there would have to be a multi-sensory approach to the creation/display of any piece, and it would necessarily involve in it the ability to foster individual curiosity.



Celina Basra

For an Art that a kid licks after peeling away the wrapper

I am for an art that a kid licks after peeling away the wrapper Claes Oldenburg

Writer, performer, actress, fisherwomen, ship designer, singer, mother, cook, alarm clock, dancer, romantic, patron saint, muse, electrician. Camera woman, recipient, elevator, guide, listener, translator, post man, DJ, curator, communicator, seeker, scientist, lamper, awardee, navigator, activist, avatar and warrior. Mediator, poet, psychologist. The audience can be a resonator, sculptress, cleaning lady, generator, guard, spice merchant, director, lover and reflector.

A light house, a library, a clinic, a playground, a post office, a kindergarten, a convalescence home, a huge humming machine, a bed, a stage, a loan, a kitchen, resistance, candy, medicine, failure, a mobile phone, a radio, a union, or a cup. A simulation, an attempt, a theme park, a question mark, a circle, a semicolon, an embrace or a fishing net. An exhibition can also be a garden, a boat or a song; a revolt, a late night shop, an aquarium, a laboratory, a book, a refuge, a compost, a bee hive, a department of loneliness or a department of love.

Ripple, run, root, flow, fly, emerge, sail, dive, watch, release, milk, scream, climb, revolt, draw, dance, question, drink, move, eat, feed, destroy, construct, diffuse, believe, loose, gain, extract, focus, cry, fail, overcome, look, look, and look again. The audience can also participate, sweep, sew, spit, accept, foresee, remix, rewrite, meditate, unbutton, fix, count, collage, dream, stand still, call, desire, sleep, swing, fight, undress, correct, rewind, contextualize, misunderstand, glide, build, love, care, criticize, need and let go.

Who can come in and who stays outside? Who is free to move and free to choose? Who asks questions, who moves around, to look at the back? Who dares to come up close, to stay for an hour, to stay all day, to look and look again? Who touches the surface and who peels away the wrapper (layer for layer for layer for layer, until the work is naked)?

The audience can be armed, or calm and ready. The audience never sleeps and the audience is everywhere. I am the audience and you are the audience. The audience has come a long way, baby. The audience flies silently at times, the audience expects, the audience talks back. The audience does not agree to disclose her data, the audience is a temple and a ferry. The audience is a blind ageless singer in Istanbul, and also just a girl, standing in front of another girl, asking her to love her. The audience is Afrofuturism and ancient rice, the audience is lyrics and moist, the audience is an avatar and listens to the whispers of the city, the audience is free. The audience is an old man and the sea and also a dog and a raven. The audience is neither man nor woman, the audience wears jasmine flowers, regardless, the audience is the arts of the working class, the audience is a house, the audience cares, the audience consumes, the audience regrets, the audience is a dolphin and a fan. The audience is energy and exhaustion, the audience dreams. The audience cuts, swipes, clicks, erases and rewrites. The audience observes and the audience revolts, the audience is greedy and the audience is unique. The audience votes against leaving, the audience wants to stay. The audience will in fact stay indefinitely and the audience is always present.

Postscript I: Implications

Hannah Drayson's workshop for bringing attention to experience, a technique situated between hypnotism, micro-interview and phenomenology, slowed down my own experiencing instantly. I noticed, not for the first time, but quite consciously, how hurriedly and superficially I often perceive my environment, and even art.

For my future writing, it imbues my practice with a sense of mindfulness, by asking myself: where am I, in this narrative, exactly? What happened in the beginning? How did it feel? And all the details and silent sub-narratives materialize, bit by bit: opening up the richness of experience, dense and vast and actually without limits.

Uncovering the underlying elements to experience that are preverbal changes the perception and the way I describe experiences. Experiencing and finding a language for that experience – these two can possibly work together in reciprocity. I can influence and change the way I perceive and experience art and the world consciously, if I let myself go with the flow, if I dare to be present.

The present moment can be a field, a garden, or a forest of experience: it is never one, always many, and contains a myriad of different versions of experiencing – I learned that I can wander back in my memory, exploring different nooks and crannies and perspectives and positions; all layers of the now.

This carries implications for my visceral experience of our manifold realities, and the sensual layers that compose the present – and thus feeds into the way I write about exhibitions and the different contemporary realities we move in.

Even in the action of simply looking at art and the world – which is the basis for all the work I do – I can see a shift happening, a new consciousness and also skepticism: have I really seen all there is to it? Or at least more than one perspective? Have I experienced enough to say what this work of art is "about"? Have I really done all there is to do with an art work? Have I done anything at all?

One way to engage and empower the audience (= myself) is moving outside traditional spaces with multiple codes of access/non-access and to address the whole bodily sensorium.

Engaging the audience (= myself) is also forgetting all you think you know about the audience. You are the audience (I am the audience), but you never completely know the audience. You can trust the audience to do some work: the emancipated viewer can do more than you think he or she can, things you never dared to do yourself. The audience is constant and ever-changing, willing or not, but here they come, and you cannot actually hide (because the audience is always present).

Postscript II: Instructions

Instructions for experiencing the Biennale: what to do with art (exemplary actions):

1. Move in the rhythm of the woven tapestry. Mirror its movements and that of the air of the ventilator with your head, your eyes, your arms, your torso, your legs, your toes. Your body might know more than you think.
2. Sing to a precious flower made of fans. Or is it a fish and a hook? Hum a low tune until it vibrates and moves and touches all the crevices of the sculpture. (I dream of walking in a wood with great trees with fishes made of fans flowing through the dark branches, illuminated like fiery balloons. I have to catch them and save them by bringing them back to the sea, but they are impossible to catch and seem to dissolve when I touch them, translucent alligator skin, I wake up.)
3. Tell your stories on the wall of the water temple to anyone who wants to listen: take a brush and paint the wall with water.
4. Sit by the sea all day. Count the sounds.
5. Do not buy a guide book or take a map, get lost, wander outside the exhibition, take a jetty and walk as far as you can.
6. Write you own instructions, forget about these. You are the author of your experience. We can also be authors together.

Ananya Rajoo

Being the Audience for Understanding the Audience

While writing about art or engaging with art in other ways, I had not pondered the question of 'What do Audiences do with Artworks?' I had observed and interacted with the audience for many projects but, the experience of art or the interpretation of art had always been majorly focused on the artwork and the artist. The workshop was a platform that allowed me to contemplate deeply on 'the audience' of art. During these five days, a group that is usually on the fringes of the performance / show was brought to the centre stage. Because of the way in which the workshop was designed, I had to bring myself to the centre stage, considering myself as an audience. "I was being the audience to understand the exchange and flow between the art and the audience." It was a journey inwards - digging deep into myself and my thought processes through my experience of art. It was also a journey from inside-out - deeply analysing how my thoughts, perceptions and life experiences have shaped my reality.

Thus, the whole process brought a sharp focus on myself - one by one, picking up the pieces that have fallen outside the realm of awareness and piecing them together to decipher new meanings and to arrive at new realisations. For accessing the experiences that were submerged in the unconscious, lifting them to the level of consciousness and bringing them to life through words, the 'Lampers' and 'Generators' provided us tools and frame works, 'micro-phenomenology' being one of the major tools.

The Role of My Intellectual Practice in Defining My Experience of Art

Using micro-phenomenological methods, primarily interviews, we were delving deep into how each of us view art, considering our experience of the artworks at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale as the current scenario. As we dissected the experience layer by layer and went in search of the inconspicuous areas of our lived experience that were triggered during our viewing of the art, I hit on a novel insight: My viewing

of art is always based on an intellectual framework created as a result of my current researches, reading, writing or other intellectual practices. While looking at art, I am often extending my intellectual quests - whether it is looking for ideas, directions or interpretations - into my experience of the art.

Though my role as an audience of art is bound to be intertwined with my line of work, I felt that this preset / predefined framework(s) is restricting my perceptions to a few directions and is, to some level, obstructing my enjoyment of the art. Refreshing my mind by viewing in a completely new way had the effect of letting go the load I am constantly carrying in my head and embracing the piece in front of me without any prejudices or expectations.

Letting Go of Words, Letting Movement Take Over

The tool for the dismantling of the frameworks was handed over to me in the following day. The tool was a class on free movement during which we visited the Biennale venues and connected with the art through movement. It was interesting barter where I traded an ever-present part of me for welcoming something entirely new - movement in lieu of words. This barter helped me in transcending the limitations in perspective that stood in between the art and myself as the audience. I left the zone of conscious thinking and let the body sway spontaneously as it engaged with art. All the labels, categories and types disappeared. I was not automatically classifying works as portraits, performance art, videos and so on. There were no words and hence, there were no tags. The old ways of connecting with art disappeared and new ways emerged. Enjoying art by tracing its patterns with the body, by imitating its shape with the arms, by feeling its movements. It was a state of high awareness and being in the present.

It was also a way to shed inhibitions and feel a closeness with the art like never before. This closeness made my eyes and my heart see the art - patterns, colours, textures, smells, sounds - in ways which were previously non-existent. The fact that we did the movement exercise as a group was a vital part of creating this experience.

Audience: Collective Experience & Individual Experience

The session on the third day where volunteers joined us to visit the Biennale was a way to further explore the process of viewing art as a group. Experiencing art as a group was vastly different from experiencing art as an individual. Each person was asked to pick an artwork they liked and guide the group in experiencing it. The knowledge, perspectives, experiences, sensibilities and observations of the guide influenced the way in which others experienced the artwork. As an individual, artworks I would have considered dull were transformed into something fascinating because of a different dimension that I was able to see in them with the help of a co-visitor. Various aspects of the artworks that could have escaped my eyes came into my sight as another group member pointed it out to me. The way I related to the spaces where art was exhibited changed as a result of the preferences and choices of my group members. These were some of the key insights I gained in the concept of audience. Based on the insights, through artistic practices and research works, I am continuing my exploration of what audiences do with artworks.

Faris Kallayi

Viewer Views Art/ Art Views Viewer

More or less, the visitors' ergonomic and viewing practices in a gallery space is predictable. There is an imagined distance that majority of visitors keep with the works of art which is also translated to their body and mind and holds them and disturbs the possibilities of corporeal and subjective engagement.

An examination of artwork viewing as a co-constitutive practice, where both artworks and visitors formulate multiple engagements, is relevant. I argue that the viewing practices form and develop the subjectivity and moral selfhood of the visitors. Theorizations of moral self by contemporary socio-cultural anthropologists Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood are handy for further analysis.

Cartesian and Kantian assumptions about moral self sharply separate and privilege moral thought over action, mind over body. Unlike these Kantian and liberal political theories of personhood which assume an autonomous and transcendent moral self, Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood argue that the moral self does not have any prior existence, but is the product of a series of cultural practices and procedures. This line of thought views moral self not as a universal, autonomous being but as a social construct produced and organized through specific cultural practices. This view asks for the examination of how a particular self is relationally constituted in and through such practices. Thinking about artwork viewing practices using this theoretical framework, requires further widening of the discourse, where the flow between viewer and artwork re/forms, modifies and disturbs each other.

Let me mention two cases here. The presence of a (Libyan) refugee in the Arsenale in Venice seeing the migrant shipwreck, which sank in the Mediterranean in 2015 with up to 1,100 migrants on board, and now turned artwork by Christoph Buchel. And the case of discreetly covering Guernica with a blue curtain when Colin Powell came to the United Nations in January 2003 to argue the case of war in Iraq. In the former, the refugee subject can raise several questions regarding the ownership and authorship of the experience, and privilege. While in the latter, a reproduction of a modern painting of major

importance that took its subject from politics with the intention of changing the way the large numbers of people thought and felt about power and war, was covered prior to the discussion on an upcoming war.

The multiple engagements in the works of art, visitor viewing art and art viewing visitor, needs to be analysed as mutually co-constitutive practices. The reactions from either part can range from approval to outrage, and everything in between.

Are distant and passive sensorial practices enough to view, immerse in, engage and interact with a work of art? It seems that the prevailing notions of engagement and encounter need to be extended. Can we think about expanding our viewing exercises to tongue and body performances, to active sensorial experiences, to text, to lines, to new media, to dream?

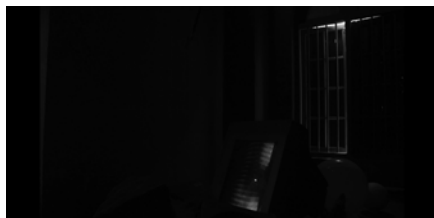
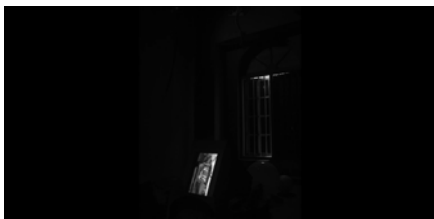
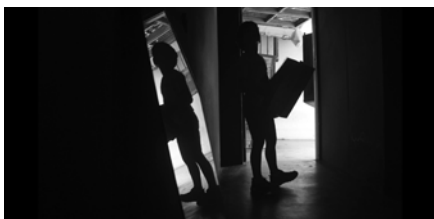
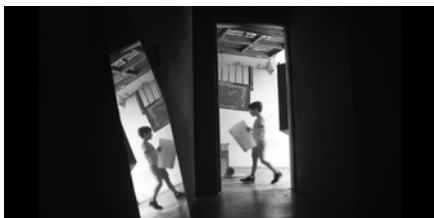
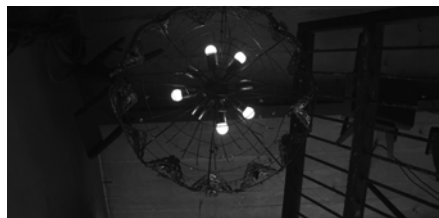
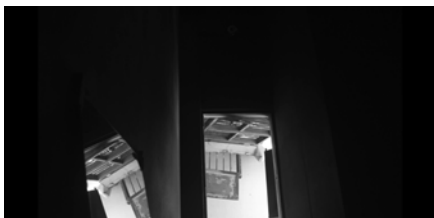
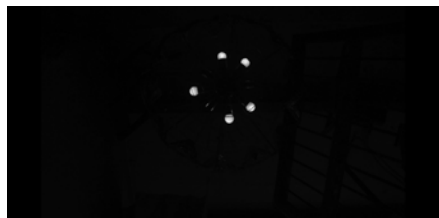
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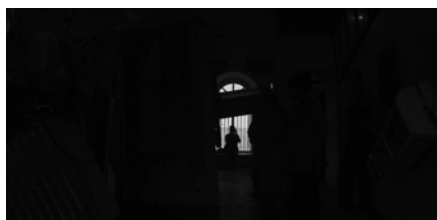
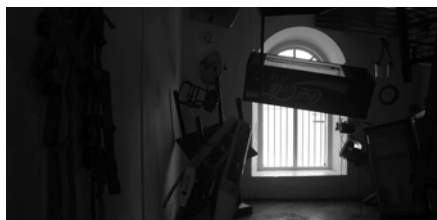
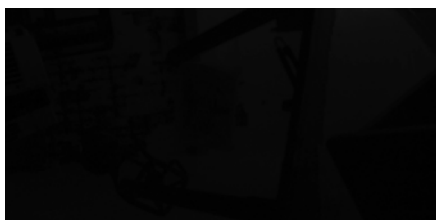
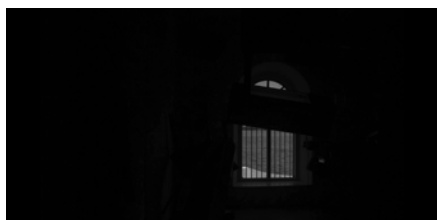
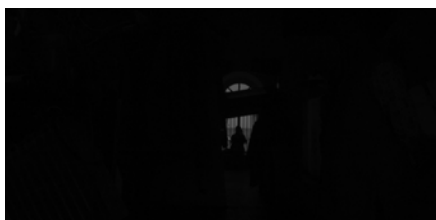
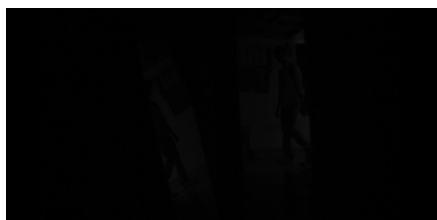
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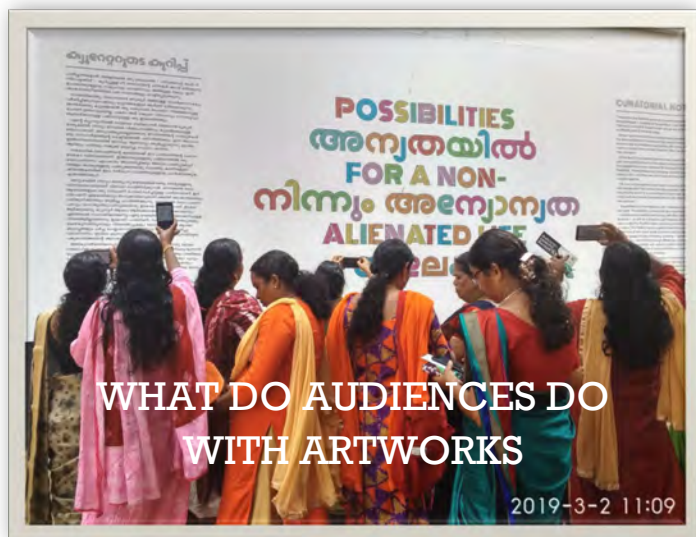
Photo essay

Shaist Banu

What do Audiences do with Artworks?







WHAT DO AUDIENCES DO WITH ARTWORKS

To answer how audiences engage with artworks, let us go back a step and examine who constitute the audience. There are a plethora of people involved with the Biennale day in and day out, the back-end support system, which is an integral part of the Biennale. Do these people constitute the audience of the Biennale, especially if they haven't really seen the artworks? Does the Biennale affect them in any way at all? How do they engage with the Biennale and its artworks? These are the questions I am interested in exploring

I spoke to a variety of people we see around the Beinnale every day, people who are an integral part of the Biennale and asked them whether they have seen the artworks, why not if they have not, and if they have what they thought about it? I wanted to explore how they engage with the artworks.



These women get their very own private, exclusive time with the artworks every morning 7-10 am as they clean the spaces before the Biennale opens to the public



Biennale's very own Postmaster who hasn't been able to see the artworks yet as he is required to be at his post 10 am to 5:30 pm. On Sundays, he rushes back home to be with his family.



*The Postmaster's
Biennale*



Between keeping the toilets clean, Rajesh and Prem Kumar have managed to see those artworks that are on the ground floor of the buildings adjacent to their work area. They hadn't forayed into the first floors yet.

They don't read Malayalam or English and so hadn't been unable to understand the blurbs. (Can't say that knowing to read those languages helped me understand it).

I suggested they take the tour, the volunteers do a good job of it.



The women of Cafe Kudumbashree are given a tour of the Biennale at the end of their engagement period every twenty days or so. One of the women who hadn't as yet seen the Biennale asked me, "Whatever am I even going to do in there?"



From his parking area, the driver of this Buggy engages with the installation in front of him as he shushes hyper-active youngsters off from the restricted area. He hasn't seen the artworks at the Biennale yet, but intends to do so very soon.



An employee of the Medical Trust Hospital, the driver of this ambulance has his duty at the Biennale every 12 days. Because his work requires him to be available at all times he hasn't seen the artworks yet.



The policemen, for whom this perhaps is the most relaxed work environment that they encounter, seem to have had opportunities to flit through the installations during the course of their work.



However, inclusion can be tricky. In my interactions I found that there were different reasons why many of these people, despite Biennale being a part of their everyday life, haven't seen the artworks. For many the **Biennale was their work place**, they had **tasks** that they had to complete in the time that they spent here. But there was also a common perception that this **event was not meant for them** and that they are here only to do their job and not engage with anything particularly.



Overheard from one of the women as her group was being briefed about the theme of "inclusion" in this year's Biennale (with a bit of playfulness might I add)- "I am unable to digest all this"

Now look at this in the context of this year's theme of inclusion. One of the **striking things about Kochi Biennale 2018** is how it aims to be **inclusive**. An aim that has not only been put to paper, but also been **incorporated in every possible way** - the **curator's** note, the posters that scream out, "**It's My Biennale**", **the choice of artist and installations**, **free entry** on Mondays, our passes giving free access to not just us but an accompanying guest and the volunteers not being too rigid about whether the name on the card matches its current holder. These are tiny ways in which the Biennale lives up to its Curator's note and its theme of **Possibilities of a Non-Alienated World**.

But for far too long has the Art Community adopted an exclusionary and holier than thou approach, alienating the general public from art spaces. Also, **disparity has been normalized** to such an extent that most of us are **unable** to even **perceive** it in most situations. And if this Biennale, which is VERY focused on inclusion AND HAS SO MANY INSTALLATIONS INVOLVING THE PUBLIC, can be seen as being an outsider thing, **one can only imagine the large gap that needs to be bridged in the field of art for art to be really inclusive.**

-SHAISTA BANU

Shaista Banu

What is it? During my conversations with the people included in the photo-essay, one question that came up a few times was, “Is this meant for us?” These people are an integral part of the Biennale, its internal support system, yet the Biennale itself was a mere workplace to them and not something to be engaged with in any other way. This also came up in my conversations with people outside of the Biennale but inside of Fort Kochi. A coconut vendor I spoke to also seemed to be under an impression that this was not meant him.

This can be translated to the context of my workplace too. I work with the Food Corporation of India, a government organization that is entrusted with providing food security to the nation by ensuring that enough food grains reach the Public Distribution System. Here too, as with most work places, there exist many invisible boundaries between people working in the same setting dictated by class, gender and caste. The work of the “mind” has come to be more valued than physical work. This devaluation often dissociates people from the organization thereby bringing a non-alignment of the objectives of the organization and that of its employees. It would be interesting to see what the different people involved at different levels of this organization understand the organization and their work to be.

Why it matters? The aim of my work at the Kochi Biennale was to bring to light the gap that often exists between different people working in the same setting. This whole support system, which is integral to the functioning of the Biennale, will easily lose significance in the presence of what people consider to be grander works of art. To bring them to paper, and capture their work in the photo-essay was essentially to ensure that they too are documented as being part of the story.

Years of conditioning has now normalized disparity to an extent that most people fail to perceive its existence at all in the first place. Documentation, therefore, becomes important. Documentation of not only the different people, but also their viewpoints and realities is essential for us to gain a better understanding of any situation. Where does the laborer, who heaves sacks of food grains every day as part of his job, figure when one is talking about food security of the nation? It is also gendered because most of the laborers are men. The women are often relegated to tasks such as sweeping and cleaning, tasks which men consider as being beneath them. What does she think about her work and her role?

Next steps: One possible step is documentation by means of a photo-essay much like the one that I created at Exchange & Flow. Documentation of the work and working conditions of the labourers who physically move the grain and maintain the work premises through images and of the thoughts and understanding of that same work through conversations.

Jacqui Knight

Museum Fatigue

As a visitor to a Biennale we are constantly being asked to look, read, watch, listen, crouch, peep, sit, smell, or touch. A fatigue sets in. How do you sustain the same intensity of viewing for everything there is to see? This is not a new problem. An observational study of 'Museum Fatigue' in *The Scientific Monthly* in 1916 lays out the problem of "just what kinds and amount of muscular effort are demanded of the visitor who endeavors to see exhibits as museum authorities plan to have them seen" (Gilman, 1916, p. 62). The study is concerned with the problem faced by creative mediators and curators, and suggests, "may not a study of how it comes about suggest some means of prevention."

The format of the large international contemporary art Biennale and the 'conveyor belt' way of consuming artworks requires much physical and mental effort from the viewer. Biennale fatigue is a thing, especially noticeable since the proliferation of International Biennales in recent years which has provoked widespread discussion about the ambitious format by which the best art from everywhere can be seen by the most people. As a viewer how do we experience it all? How do we give everything the same level of attention? Artworks often require more than the average 7 seconds, we're told at art school, it takes to hold the attentions of your audience. What becomes apparent is the process by which as a viewer you become discerning about your interaction with artworks. The subjective assumptions, biases and prejudices you make about a particular medium and format, style or technique, the content or message, its references or presentation become very clear. Additionally, our investment, our engagement with artworks, can be influenced by crowds and heat as well as sometimes also requiring map reading and navigation skills. As you walk from room to room encountering artworks and text and sound you might have a self-reflexive moment when you realise that subconsciously you are making judgements very quickly about which artworks to spend time with and which to disregard.

Dr Lalitha Poluru

Archives: A Framework for Knowledge Dissemination Hubs

The write-up is focused on the exchange of knowledge and flow of information through archives. Archives are considered as 'memory institutions' as they retain documents of human activities for a long term value. They act as connecting dots from the past to the present and future. The archives hold a wide range of formats like written texts, negatives, photographs, moving images, sound, digital and analogue.

With the technological innovations and long term preservation techniques, it has become possible to provide the digital archival contents to the stakeholders. Yet, there are some bottlenecks for the exchange of the knowledge and free flow of information.

The challenge is the amount of relevant digital content to be provided to the stakeholders. Here it is important to understand the users' experiences and requirements to facilitate research. The faculties and scholars can be taken as the guiding voices while putting on the tremendous efforts to digitize the contents. "The role of scholars are increasingly important as digitization initiatives advance from static collections of scanned materials into complex research portals providing new and vitally valuable ways to interact with digitized texts, images and media" (Green, Wade, Cole, & Han, 2015).

In spite of the availability of digital contents, it is not easy to access the information without proper 'search interface' and 'mapped metadata'. "Participatory archiving encourages community involvement during the appraisal, arrangement and description phases of creating an archival records" (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). With search interface and mapping of the metadata with digital objects the archive can potentially support the multidisciplinary research/work.

The engagement of the users with the archive is to be analysed. It is important to interview the users and to understand on their use of collections and experiences with the archive. The digitized content in the archive will have a potential to attract researchers from multiple disciplines. If scholars from multi-disciplinary background use the archive, that may draw the attention of more

scholars towards the archive. Thereafter, the searching patterns of the researchers can be noted to understand the type of content in which they are interested and to enhance the searching that will help them in retrieving exact information.

In order to make the archive lively, some scholarly activities like talks, display of collections related to specific collections, workshops, conferences and outreach programmes can be planned to be organized.

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Annalisa Mansukhani

Explorations of memory and its fallibility

Explorations of memory and its fallibility form fascinating intersections with the way we archive our personal narratives. Memory, if understood as several processes of knowing, is an interweaving of many acts of remembering and forgetting - determined by what occurs before. As a participant of the *Exchange & Flow* workshop, I was drawn towards the dynamics of narratives within memory itself, and the ways in which we as individuals choose to articulate these narratives through the use of language. Intrigued by the vagaries of our own archival desires and self-expressions, I hope to work towards tracing a specific act of recollection - the writing of poetry. Looking very closely at the formation of a vocabulary of trauma through a study of my own understandings of the same, I would like to examine the relationship between the initial affect, and the focused creative intention that allows for a processing of a traumatic situation. Through such an exercise, I would be revisiting my own personal proclivities towards poetry, while also delving into what I deem are the perennial archival tendencies of the self.

Archit Guha

As the user and creator of archives, I have often wondered how we negotiate the basis on which we produce historical knowledge. How do we know when there are gaps, erasures, and contradictions? Archiving, as a systematic recording of sources is often not acknowledged enough as a creative curatorial exercise where our sources are incomplete, damaged, or simply not available. Similarly, the historian's craft is often seen as limited to the universe the archive constructs for us, and the attempt remains to exhaust all the sources regardless of the limitations of the archive. Therefore, the implication within the disciplinary boundaries of history, is how can we be scientifically truthful by finding more empirical evidence by way of primary sources? Moving away from 'archive fever', the workshop has, however, pushed me to consider an alternative proposition, to think more critically about what it means for an archive to have an audience? How do I as a member of the audience (read: a user), engage with my sources while navigating them as a conduit that allows them to speak through me -- not simply as a reflexive exercise, but as a means to engage with the performative potential of the relationship between the audience and the archive? Can this also perhaps be a way to think more closely about the more traditionally received questions of gaps, erasures, and contradictions in the archive?

I propose to explore these theoretical provocations through my recent research on the history of the cyclone as a scientific concept that emerged out of nineteenth century South Asia. My work looked at the intellectual and scientific works of the progenitor of the term cyclone, Henry Piddington, who as an early meteorologist in mid-nineteenth century Calcutta was able to amass a wide variety of data and sources to produce pedagogical works that advanced a science of the storm, employing textual and visual elements? In the age of the Anthropocene, this is a fascinating and important historical narrative to uncover, but one that is not without its gaps, erasures, and contradictions. The archive never supplied any concrete evidence about various parts of Piddington's life -- his education, his religious beliefs -- much of his life beyond his scientific writings, which nevertheless had bearings on his knowledge production. I felt limited in my research, and was told to address these as a good historian would, by uncovering more sources and reading more closely. What would an approach more attentive to the audience-archive dynamic offer by way of addressing these issues? Can the scientific, artistic, and ecological richness of this moment tell a different yet compelling narrative than simply succumbing to the impulse to increase the quantum of sources?

Seema Massot

The micro-questioning exercise and the import layered responses in audience experience: When a writer can use the tools of micro-interviewing in her writing process, the depth and range of responses that are often over looked or dismissed while say reviewing an art work can in fact offer a whole new vocabulary to describe it. As a novice to this practice, it seems to me that this exercise taps into some kind of subconscious memory from where rich descriptive details are accessed and which could also be beneficial in the analysis of the artwork. We often fall into the trap of giving too much weightage to analysis and understanding while overlooking/minimizing the experiential part while writing about or engaging with art.

This especially reinforces my focus on minimizing the art world jargon in writing while offering a text of quality to readers.

Improvisation/singing/drawing/photography immersive experiences:

These group activities made an immediate impact on how we related to the exhibits and had a delayed, continuous effect on our recollection of them. They afforded the inhibited a safe space to start exploring and the motivated people an exciting opportunity to constructively further their engagement.

I can imagine using these tools is while designing guided tours or group activities for young/ first time visitors in the larger objective of audience development.

Upcoming publications in which to apply the learnings from the workshop:

An audience experience centric article on the Chennai Photo Biennale for Arts Illustrated – April-May 2019 issue.

Review of a contemporary art exhibition by South Korean and Indian artists for Arts Illustrated – April-May 2019 issue. Critical appreciation of “Pariyerum Perumal” (Tamil movie on caste violence) for The Economic and Political Weekly (Issue – to be determined). I would also like to explore the possibility of writing for Leonardo the journal.

Ajithlal Sivalal

Jasmine walk immersive theatre performance project

It happened two years back when I got some flower from a friend and I just wore it intuitively. The moment I wore it, I got ridiculed and called gay and a lot more things. So I decided to wear the flower in my head till my room no matter what I was named after that.

Jasmine walk became an immersive theatre performance and public forum to talk about gender and free expression. A journey which unfolds a series of events after one intervention in public space wearing jasmine flower. First developed and performed in Gender Bender Bangalore 2018 it will now be reimagined with the help of Exchange and Flow workshop. The workshop enabled me to reflect on the current status of audience engagement of the work and the thinking of extending came at this immersive possibility by enabling the audience to become participants to walks in street wearing jasmine flower and tries to understand what is the real deal.

The new Jasmine walk will invite its participants/audience to a journey of experience by wearing jasmine flower regardless of gender and experience public behaviour towards this very simple harmless self-decoration, or be a spectator in the continuously redefining intervention space and get involved in the conversation. The performance asks the participant to define their status in this incident.

After the intervention participants will get together to discuss and analyse the experience with various techniques like micro-phenomenology. The forum will always be open to discuss the experience and insights from the exploration online and also individuals can do this by themselves and are free to share with other people who would like to explore. It is an open journey in search of free expressive space without boundaries of caste, class and gender.

The exploration will be documented and be a starting point for creative thought towards generating theatre performance, examining public space behaviour and reimagining our perspectives on gender.

These are the questions the project address:

- How will you react to a man wearing jasmine and walking in the street?
- What thought will go through your mind, will you question his masculinity?
- Will you question his sanity?
- Will you approach him and reproach him?
- Will you go and make fun of him?
- Will you pass a comment?
- Would you think he is gay?
- Just exactly why can't the idea of masculinity and the idea of wearing flowers on one's body match up?
- Why is it accepted, in fact celebrated and idealised, that women wear flowers?
- Why is it so symbolic of her purity of marriage and of beauty, and does the same symbolism exist when it comes to a man wearing the flower?

Next Steps:

Ajithlal is also on a journey of writing a play exploring masculinity from the experience of the exploration. The exploration was a physical experience of the effect of gaze and to him and the impositions of toxic masculine standards to the body. The work looking for a creative space which will explore the possibility of the existence of body and expressions out of the majoritarian standard and allowing the form and expression of ones being in flow the way it wanted to be.

The writing will be collaborative by collecting experiences and creation of a form which will express the emotion and sense of the incidents and create new dialogues. The performance will create a space of conversation directly at the root by putting it in public space and also, by getting immersed in the act, the audience/participant will be able to reflect it better and start their own journeys of Jasmine/"..." walk.

The work is looking for collaborators, performance spaces, institutions, people etc to continue it's journey with exploration, talks and performances so if you would like to be a part of Jasmine walk feel free to connect to us. ajithsivalal@gmail.com or spaceofacttheatre@gmail.com

Sateesh Kumar

There was no systematic method for my writing process which was arbitrary, noting down thoughts here and there. When a specific project comes up many of these thoughts will not be traceable. Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2018 facilitated a writing workshop from March 01 till 05 at Fort Kochi, Kerala, India. I found myself in the company of twenty participants from all over the world articulating perception and documenting the experiences of encountering art works from the audience point of view.

In the same period I had a deadline to complete a theatre play and was struggling with the climax sequence. The play was discussing philosophy of big data management through the love life of a fisherman turned hacker. Intended audience in Kerala are intellectually embraced the philosophy of industrialisation – Marxist humanism, when the existential realm was agricultural feudalism. They have undergone quantum leap from agrarian society to sophisticated digital society in consumption level but the belief systems are divided in between feudalism and humanism. My specific audience for contemporary theatre demands modern humanistic conceptual deliverance in the form of messages.

The first day of writing workshop we engaged with interviewing techniques revolving around context, goal, judgement and knowledge. These steps I applied to my specific goal of generating idea for the climax of my play. Self-interviewing technique was employed for deriving experiential memory and the emotions attached to the big data. But the answers and the ideas were problematizing the big data rather than a consoling resolution. Second day was about perceiving the art work by using senses other than eyes. We were exposed to feel the work of art displayed in Biennale through singing, kinaesthetic, sketching and photo documenting through third party viewer expressions. I was taking part in the spot improvised singing responding to the work of art and then writing about this enhanced experience. Third day was involving with role-play in which I was instructing others to explore admiring the work of art through spot singing. While revisiting the experiences we used writing exercises like spot writing for 20 minutes, critical writing, continuous writing etc. These techniques were also did not deliver the climax. But after the five days of rigorous writing and thinking process culminated to an early morning dream which showed the way out as the climax.

The recent floods in Kerala had seen an unprecedented rescue operation coordinated by individual personal call centres on their smart devices. It was a crude form of improvised chain - block technology of data management and direct service system operated by fishermen community. The play will pose this silver line as climax where the data management shall be symbolized by lifting up fishing net using chain pulley blocks. This installation in motion will be assisted by sounds and dialogues to connect the downfall of fishing net to rain, lifting action to a decentralised data management system with checks and controls. Thus, I could complete my play.

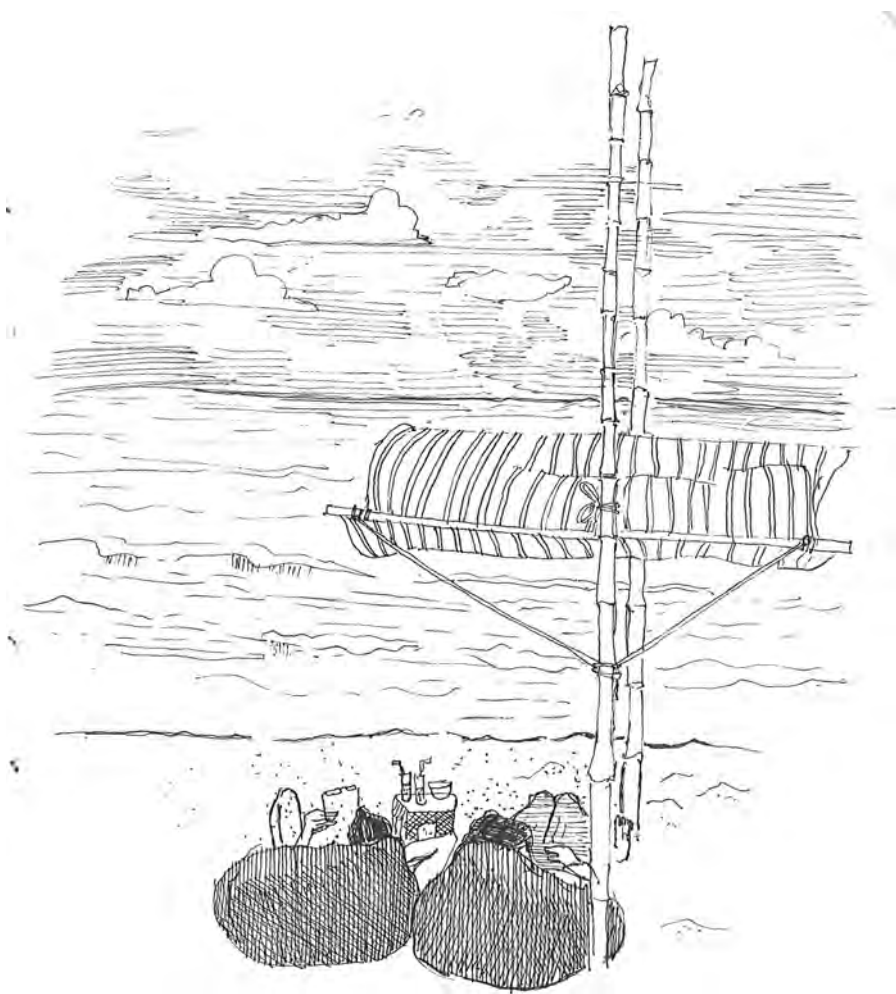
Thanks to the mentors of workshop, my process of writing improved.

Jo Simons

As visitors to India, we are often duty bound to write endless complimentary essays about the delightful textiles and visual delights we see on our short trips here. I would like to reveal through a collection of twenty two short stories, the confusions, heartache, learning, fascination, determination, strength, courage actually required to live here as a mid life woman.

I hope my stories are politically resonant with women (and men) from all walks of life, and offer insight, hope and humour that uplifts and remind us that humour and accurate observation, often helps even in the toughest of struggles.

I am not here to reform India. I am here to participate. I would like my stories to be told through the voice of The Bad Indian Wife. I intend to cover a variety of subjects, including travel, art, yoga, feminism, education, marriage, empowerment, emotional strength, Inclusion etc.



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Udit Parekh

The drawing workshop

Questions for the workshop.

How do we represent our Ideas and Thoughts without words?

How mediums like drawing/sketching can boost our ability to write?

When we write, how our senses can help us to understand the context better?

How can we represent these sensorial experiences?

We write because we want express. But when we are in the process of writing we always want to do justice to the primary experience. And to improvise we need a new way of thinking / Putting ideas and thoughts in different ways.

What can dots do?

Dots and Lines.

Words come together to form sentences visually act as lines.

In sketching when more than one dot come together it starts formulating a line. Directions of dots define the line.

So, if we imagine words as dots and sentences as line one can develop an abstract image of the writing which allows a certain level of structuring. This version of writing can give us develop a visual composition that helps in making a strong perception of the content.

The exercise was formulated in 4 parts.

- 1) Observe your surroundings and put it down in words. Use these words to develop sentences.
- 2) Close your eyes and try to listen to the surrounding and note down words which are coming to your mind and spread them in the paper space however you want and now join them with each other and try to develop the story. The exercise will be done by using only different types of lines and different size of dots and make a composition.
- 3) Once you get the hang of it close your eyes and smell your surroundings. Try to draw it out first and then write about it.
- 4) Write the words in the space and draw lines between the words to make a composition. And in the end dots starts formulating lines and words formulate sentences.

Participant biographies

Shaista Banu is currently working with the Food Corporation of India as a Quality Control Manager.

Celina Baljeet Basra is a writer and curator currently based in Berlin. She is interested in art practices intersecting with sociology: as spaces and situations for investigation, encounter and conflict, conviviality and radical hospitality; as platforms to present alternative configurations of the present; including fragments, bits, revolts and loans, ruins, faults and healing. She is, in Glissant's words, interested in multiplying the number of worlds inside a museum space – and also, like Claes Oldenburg, for the kind of art that a kid licks, after peeling away the wrapper. Ever since she examined Alighiero é Boetti's *One Hotel* in her Master's thesis, her curatorial thought and practice have been shaped by Boetti's idea of ping-pong, understanding each art work as a shared experience; working not just in a dialogue, but a polylogue. She has recently been part of the team of 10th Berlin Biennale (Publication Office & Mediation Team, 2018) as well as Shanghai Curators Lab, in association with 12th Shanghai Biennale (2018). Celina has curated the Berlin art space Galerie im Turm and has been Assistant Curator at Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien from 2015 – 2017. She graduated in Art History in a Global Context from Freie Universität Berlin in 2015 and contributed to a research project on the Interrelated Dynamics of Display and Situation within Aesthetic Reflection (Freie Universität Berlin, 2011-2014). Celina regularly contributes to *Sleek Magazine*.

Sahaj Umang Singh Bhatia has been interested in the distinction that makes a certain thing a piece of 'art' and separates ordinary objects from art. He looks for things overlooked in our noisy and cluttered big-cities that pose the question, 'What is art?' Does its status need to be validated by the weight of its author or the place where it is displayed? He has written photo-essay for an edition of *The Lookout Journal* called 'Everywhere Art' (Quarterly Issue 3, October 2018) [<https://www.thelookoutjournal.com/daily-art/2018/9/18/girlposters>] exploring these questions through pictures of pop-neon posters of massage parlours in Kolkata. In the city of Bokaro, he has documented steel statues and how in the public space each has developed a character within the city. Sahaj also works with school children taking theatre workshops and is a member of the band *menwhopause*.

Amit Bhavsar is an independent musicologist, who started his career in 1978 as pianist, composer, music director, orchestrator and synthesist. He makes documentary films on various communities' basic needs, livelihood, culture and rights. Human Hands and Structure of Music is Amit's main area of expertise. He has introduced UMA (Universal Musical Anatomy) – a theory and SHASHTHAK mathematical principles for attending and calibrating diverse musical structures in an all-inclusive universal musical linguistics - at scale. Amit's following inventions are in academically under researched areas: a Human Finger Motion based musical AI music (de)composition sequencer MAQAM; museion, a universal piano keyboard for viewing any musical note clusters analogous to human brain. Includes

software for Graphical latticial network and colour gradience for tracking musical structural transitions. Presently he is working on an online open access repository mechanisms to scale variable human attention spans while having musical exposure.

Samira Bose was Communications Assistant for Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2018. She was student curator for Odds & Ends, GALLERYSKE, Bangalore (2017), and worked as part of the Communications Team at Oddbird Theatre & Foundation, New Delhi. She completed her MA in Arts & Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Christophe Boyer is a French singer and teacher who lives and works in Paris. After fifteen years of classical and traditional singing as a member of the a cappella quartet *Soleil Sonne*, he has taught for the past ten years vocal improvisation and spontaneous singing. His passion is exploring how music can arise from the total freedom of the present moment. He published a book in 2017, *Le Tao du Chant Spontané*, which introduces in a poetic and philosophical way, the basics of this art of singing. He performs also in two groups of spontaneous music: *Cinco da Luz* and *Kâli Seekers*.

Harshada Desai is a trained Product Designer from Glasgow School of Art, UK. While she was a student she developed a keen interest in the social sciences and its application in design. Currently, she is based in Ahmedabad, India where she founded theObservatory, a consulting firm specialising in design research, ethnography and strategy.

Dr Hannah Drayson is co-convenor of the Transtechnology Research group, and a lecturer in the School of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Plymouth. Hannah's research focuses primarily on the intersections between arts, science and medicine, in particular on the ways in which the movements of concepts and technologies between these disciplines and practices influence what we think about, and how we experience embodiment. Over the course of her PhD research completed in 2011, she developed a particular interest in the paradoxical phenomenon of the placebo effect. On this line her work continue to explore relations between media and techniques that are used to mobilise or support the imagination to productive effects, in particularly in therapeutic and medical settings, she is currently pursuing a number of research themes around this concept, in particular concepts in philosophy and turn-of-the-century psychology such as ideo-plasticity and the material imagination. Hannah is an associate editor of *Leonardo Reviews*, part of *Leonardo*, Journal of the Society of the Arts, Science, and Technology.

Mohita Ghosal's undergraduate dissertation 'Analysis of the 21st century's youngest generation: Gen Z & it's changing paradigms of childhood' in its simplest form, was a study of the child as an active researcher in society. It explored

identity construction, social roles, age based-prejudice and ability to comprehend mature content based on various influencing factors such as rapid development of technology, changing parenting styles etc. Mohita has published 'Understanding the nature of surrealism and its contribution to cinema: as seen through the films of Dulac, Bunuel and Dali' on academia.edu. The paper delves into the nature of surrealist cinema from its start in the early 1920s to 1930, exploring defining characteristics, processes and principles of the movement and how it manifests in cinema. As part of a module on literature and culture during her undergraduate degree, she had the wonderful opportunity to take classes such as: communication theory, audience theory, cyber cultures, memory-witness-trauma and aesthetics-of-the-imperfect. Much of her unpublished writing (and present interests) fall within these topics.

Dr Joanna Griffin is a Research Fellow with Transtechnology Research at the University of Plymouth, UK and Co-Investigator of the Technology, Exchange and Flow: India project (November 2018-May 2019). Previously in India she co-convened the symposium 'Creative Encounters with Science and Technology' with Dr Muthatha Ramanathan at Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2016. She held a Teaching Fellowship at CEPT University, Ahmedabad (2016-17) and as Artist-in-Residence at Srishti Institute, Bangalore led the Moon Vehicle project in collaboration with ISRO (2008-10) co-initiating the ten-day public festival of astronomy *Kalpaneya Yatre: Journey of Imaginations* (2010). Her AHRC funded doctoral research concerned the audience of space technology and she is currently completing a film and publications about the collaboration between creative practitioners and space scientists during the formational years of the Indian space programme. She has held an International Arts Council England Artist Fellowship at the Space Science Lab, UC Berkeley, co-created a number of art/science projects with The Arts Catalyst, presented at International Astronautical Congresses in Glasgow, Beijing and Naples, written for *Leonardo*, *Space Policy* and *Cultural Politics* and exhibited prints, drawings and films internationally. As a teacher she has held lecturing posts in Fine Art at the University of Wolverhampton, Winchester School of Art, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology and Cardiff School of Art.

Diksha Gupta worked with the Kochi Biennale Foundation and is a doctoral student with the Department of History of Art, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University. Her MA dissertation, "Chthonic Thinking: Earthly Configurations of the Racial" interrogated modern representational frameworks as they relate to the earth. Diksha is most interested in developing ways in which we can subvert established notions on judgement of contemporary art.

Archit Guha is currently an adviser at the US-India Educational Foundation in New Delhi. He researches and archives, and has a background in the social sciences.

Hamsini Hariharan researches on foreign policy and international relations. She is the host of the 'States of Anarchy' podcast. She is also a writer and poet. She can be reached on Twitter where her handle is @HamsiniH.

Murielle Ikareth grew up in a small village in France in a loving middle class family. No one could have imagined that she would live her adult life in India for the past twenty-nine years. I believe that wherever we are coming from, we should all feel happy about who we are. My fields of activity are highly influenced by multidisciplinary thinking, Ayurveda, Arts and Creativity being central to my quest for harmony and wellbeing. I have studied various body techniques and dance (Bharata Natyam, contemporary, improvisation, theatre, yoga, meditation) that I can use in my practice. Working for more than 10 years with ayurvedic doctors, I wrote a book on deliciously healthy cooking. I am at present running an ayurvedic centre and also organize creative movement workshops (schools, corporate, NGOs). Believing deeply in the body and mind interaction, I have created personal development techniques mixing the old wisdom of Ayurveda and the innovative methods of creative movement and dance therapy. Our body is a beautiful tool to understand ourselves better and help us live life with respect for ourselves and the people around the world. Creative movement therapy sessions create a safe and non-judgmental environment to promote communication. It helps people deal with a wide range of emotional, social, psychological and physical issues through the use of movement and dance to finally find strategies to cope alone with daily challenges, on personal as well as professional level.

Salma Jamal is Head of Research at the Gidree Bawlee Foundation of Arts which is based in a remote village in the North of Bangladesh. Salma is an English literature graduate, writer and publisher in the fields of art. She is currently working in Dhaka and Thakurgaon where she is researching the extents and impacts of community art and social practice in Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries.

Anushka Jasraj is an independent writer, editor and teacher. Her interests include tarot reading as interactive performance. She is also curious about how adults and children experience art in different ways.

Rohana Jeyaraj believes that every writer wields a certain amount of power, and also bears a responsibility - the power to be able to visit any permutation and combination of possibilities in this universe; and the responsibility of taking the rest of the world through them, with stories, visuals, words. I also believe that there is no cap on the impact of powerful writing. My formal education in computer science engineering has helped me build a foundation of understanding of science, technology and media, while my involvement in writing and dance and theatre in their classical and contemporary forms have allowed me to recreate stories to enthrall new audiences. I am currently focused on building a career and life of writing in the arts and cultural spheres.

Faris Kallayi is a research based curator. His interests range from South Asian vernacular and literary cultures to Indian Ocean cultural and commercial networks. He curated the exhibitions *Reso-nuances*, Town Hall, Malappuram (2018), *Interrogation*, DHI University, Malappuram (2017) and *Malabari Gala*, Durbar Hall Art Gallery, Kochi (2016). Currently he is working as Associate Editor at TAKE on art magazine. Earlier he was associated with Kochi Biennale Foundation and Mappila Heritage Library. His upcoming curatorial project, a travelling show named *Flow*, will be look into the happenings around the Indian Ocean marine rim.

Dinaz Kalwachwala is an independent film-maker, screen writer and production designer and is currently based in Mumbai. She graduated from the National Institute of Design (Ahmedabad, India) in Film Making and has worked extensively with marginalized communities in social and development communications at grass root level.

Jacqui Knight MA is a Marie Curie (ITN) Research Fellow with the Cognition Institute and final year PhD researcher with Transtechnology Research at the University of Plymouth. As a practicing artist and doctoral researcher, her research retrofits an understanding of photography as a manifestation of human engagement with matter in order to address photography's changing ontology in technological photographic practices. She is currently lead researcher for TAaCT a collaborative research project between Digital Horizon at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust and Transtechnology Research that aims to develop alternative and holistic approaches to medical care by reviewing the tools, methodologies and approaches in the teaching and training of healthcare professionals. She has previously held lecturing posts in Critical Theory and Fine Art across various institutions including Cardiff Metropolitan University, University of Plymouth. and University of Falmouth. As co-founder of artist film lab Cinestar based in Cornwall, she has been dedicated in supporting creative work with analogue film through experimental workshops, screening events and education. She has exhibited and curated numerous film screening events and group exhibitions internationally and has had a solo show at Nancy Victor Gallery, London.

<http://trans-techresearch.net/>

<http://www.cognovo.eu/>

<https://plymouth.academia.edu/JacquiKnight>

<http://www.cinestar.org.uk/>

Sateesh Kumar is currently working on a graphic novel based on a black human god of Kochi. Sateesh trained in theatre, both in traditional classical acting techniques and modern method acting. During this period he was an assistant script writer and director and trained in lighting, set design and sound design for avant garde plays. He wrote and was assistant director of the HD format film *Hunters*, an experience which allowed him full exposure to digital film making and

script development. He also worked on the play *Comala*, based on Malayalam short story inspired from Pedro Paramo. In this play the stage was shared by actors and multimedia screen and it led him to explore moving installation concepts for the modern theatre presentation. Sateesh's exposure to the classical theatre forms of Kerala, such as Theyyam, Koodiyattam and Kathakali, led him to make three documentaries: Docu-fiction on Theyyam was focussed on the befriending and consoling psychology of the ritual. His association with Thiranottam, a cultural organisation in Dubai supporting Kathakali and Koodiyattam enabled him to produce two documentaries on the aesthetical challenges of the classical art form in contemporary stage.

Rupsa Kundu is a writer and an art and design practitioner base in Kolkata. She is affiliated to the Department of History of Art, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University. Her interests encompass art practices in terms of medium, language and form as a conscious choice by the artist in particular socio-political or personal situations, as well as the existing notions of viewership and the questions around them. Rupsa was a participant in Fertellendeweis, International ArtCamp 2018 which was a program of Leeuwarden Cultural Capital of Europe.

Annalisa Mansukhani read history during her undergraduate studies at St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. She pursued her postgraduate education in art history at the School of Historical Studies, Nalanda University, with a specialization in contemporary Indian photography. Her specific areas of interest include intersections within histories of the archive and photography, contemporary art, spaces of exhibition, and museum studies. She worked at the Kochi Biennale Foundation as a Research & Publications Assistant for the fourth edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. She now works with the Foundation of Indian Contemporary Art in Delhi.

Seema Massot has a Masters Degree from SciencesPo University in Paris and has been working in cultural management for the last ten years. Her primary research interests are the arts, language and culture. She has been engaging with culture in the broader sense of the term by exploring the role of the arts in urbanism, the crucial role of language in cinema and now by writing about experiencing art.

Mark Paul Meyer is senior curator of "Expanded Cinema" at the EYE Filmmuseum in Amsterdam. He has worked as a curator for more than twenty-five years. He studied philosophy at the University of Amsterdam and photography at the Fotoacademie in Amsterdam. His research interests include film restoration, silent cinema, experimental cinema, expanded cinema, the relations between film and other art forms and the material aspects of film and photography. He is a staff member of the MA course Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image at the University of Amsterdam and co-editor of the book *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Oxford 2000).

Dr Jahnavi Phalkey is the Founding Director of Science Gallery Bengaluru. A historian of science and technology, and a filmmaker formerly based at King's College London, she read politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and at the University of Bombay, and received her PhD in the history of science from the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta. She is the author *Atomic State: Big Science in Twentieth Century India*; and producer-director of the documentary film *Cyclotron*.

Dr. Lalitha Poluru is presently Head & Deputy Librarian for the Knowledge Management Centre at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. Her areas of academic interest are Information Literacy, Institutional Repositories, Digital Libraries/Archives, E- Learning, Open Access, Scientometrics and Webometrics.

Prof dr. Michael Punt is a Professor of Art and Technology at the University of Plymouth. He is the founding convenor of Transtechnology Research which has a constituency of 20 international doctoral, post-doctoral and visiting researchers who use a range of practice and theory based methods in making apparent evidence of human desire and cultural imperatives as they are manifested in the way that science and technology is practiced, innovated by entrepreneurs and interpreted by its users. He is an international co- editor for *Leonardo*, Editor-in-Chief of *Leonardo Reviews* and founded *Leonardo Quarterly Reviews*, an experimental publishing platform published through MIT Press and UT Dallas, which is a digest of review items contextualized by newly commissioned essays on 'burning issues' in the art, science, technology debates. He is also a founding member of the *Leonardo* book series committee and advisor to Consciousness, Literature and the Arts (Rodopi).

Michael Punt practiced and exhibited internationally as a sculptor and film maker until 1990 when he brought the experience of his practice and research into film history to bear on a revisionist account of early cinema history as a consequence of a research grant at the University of Amsterdam. He subsequently extended this into a wider consideration of the cognitive determinants of technological form in audio-visual media. He has jointly produced two books, made 15 films and published over 100 articles on cinema history and digital technology in key journals. Between 1996 and 2000 he was a monthly columnist for *Skrien*, the Dutch journal of audiovisual media, writing on the interaction between the internet and cinema as it was developing. From 2009-2013 he was Project Leader of the HERA funded 'Technology, Exchange and Flow' following which he was Co-Investigator for *Cognovo*, a Marie Curie ITN for twenty-five doctoral studentships crossing the arts and cognitive sciences.

Ananya Rajoo is a writer, co-founder and editorial lead of the Kochi based online magazine *Route Cochin* (routecochin.com). The magazine focuses on creating projects that narrate stories from the history and culture of Kochi. These projects document the culture of the city and promote discourse on Kochi's social and cultural scenarios. In 2017, as a participating artist for an exhibition

called Mattancherry curated by Riyas Komu, Ananya ventured into a collaborative project which combined text and photography to develop a medium of artistic expression for long form writing. <http://uruartharbour.com/work/route-cochin-breudher-the-bread-of-the-dead/>. Ananya is a key part of design studio based in Kochi called Pixel Nirvana where she handles content development and research for art and design projects.

Asmita Sarkar is an artist and researcher. She is an MFA graduate from Gray's School of Art, Scotland. She also holds a Master's degree in Experimental Psychology from University of Calcutta. She is a Faculty member at the Srishti Institute of Art. Her research interests include contemporary drawing & painting, art-science collaboration in art & design, and phenomenological aesthetics. She has published peer reviewed articles on International journals and currently working on her PhD (registered in Manipal Academy of Higher Education,) thesis on phenomenology of contemporary painting. Asmita tries to maintain a balance between writing and art-making and researches the relationship between them.

Prof Sundar Sarukkai is a Philosopher of Science and the Founding-Director of the Manipal Centre for Philosophy & Humanities, Manipal University, India where he led the Centre from 2010-2015. He has been a Homi Bhabha Fellow, Fellow of IAS, Shimla and PHISPC Associate Fellow as well as Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. He is the author of *Translating the World: Science and Language* (2002), *Philosophy of Symmetry* (2004), *Indian Philosophy and Philosophy of Science* (2005), *What is Science?* (2012) and *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory* (2012, co-authored with Gopal Guru). Among his other professional activities, Sundar Sarukkai is an Editorial Advisory Board member of the *Leonardo Book Series* on science and art, published by MIT Press and the Series Editor for Science and Technology Studies, Routledge. His forthcoming book *Experience, Caste and the Everyday Social* written with Gopal Guru will be published later this year.

Siyad Bin Sayid is Founder of Perpendicular Films. He is interested in questions of individuality and identity, in apparently multicultural urban spaces. He recently wrote a story outline for cinema, about the endeavours and struggles of a south Indian Muslim immigrant in the Mumbai metropolis and an adaptation of an HG Wells short story to the Indian context. His wider research interests include the democratization of knowledge and power and the transience of commercial art and audience participation.

Soorya S. Shenoy is a graduate in Literature from Lady Shri Ram College at New Delhi and currently pursuing her bachelors in Law from Government Law College, Ernakulam. She is a twenty-two-year old woman who fell in love with words and colours two years back, much to her own surprise. Her father used to write her letters when she was at the hostel, which might be one of the prime reasons why she started writing at all. Beginning with long messages for friends on their

birthdays, she now writes down the most striking affairs of lives, in and around her, of what seemingly is ineffable. Brushes and colours were strangers until she attended a Madhubani workshop where the instructor effortlessly made her fall in love with colours. Since then, art has become a form of therapy and self- discovery for her and she is slowly picking up Gond, Saura and Warli art forms. “I believe art need not be inherited, it can be picked up at any age, with a bit of love, effort and passion. I would love to see myself as a happy waterfall, falling, getting hurt and rising than to be a safe pond.”

Jo Simmons is an independent writer and co-editor of an online art forum for artists and art professionals. Jo has previously worked with conflict resolution in mentored groups in the UK, and attended a number of experiential and experimental groups run by Leah Bartal and Hazel Carey, using myth, bodywork and storytelling to explore personal development through poetry and art.

Ajithlal Sivalal is an actor, theatre-maker and performance artist from Kerala, India. He is Artistic Director of Space of Act collective, which is a free space for imagination, dialogue and aesthetic explorations. He has performed on more than two hundred stages with fifteen major play productions with diverse theatre companies and theatre-makers from India and abroad. To recognise stories and to share experiences he explores various forms and spaces from streets to moving buses to popular theatres etc. and performance art, theatre, singing and street performances appear as a hybrid in his projects. He was awarded a Gender Bender grant 2018 by Goethe Institute and Sandbox collective, Bangalore and received a Young Artist Fellowship from the Ministry of Culture Kerala government. He studied Master of Theatre Arts Calicut University School of Drama and Intensive actor training from National School of Drama Bangalore Centre.

Udit Parekh and **Dharun Vyas** founded Fingerprint Collective in 2016, a collective that envisioned the idea of a multi-disciplinary design environment in an office that is free of hierarchy and believed in design projects of a collaborative nature. Since then Fingerprint Collective has grown to have clients in UK, Singapore, India and has a strong network of design enthusiasts, artists and entrepreneurs in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Udit and Dharun have worked on projects of different scales and typologies varying from Indian crafts inspired murals, illustrations and caricatures to brand identity, logo design and event design. For the past two years Fingerprint Collective has twice collaborated with the artist and curator Dr Joanna Griffin on two reputed projects for the Kochi Biennale. In 2016 Fingerprint Collective helped set-up the arts and science symposium ‘Creative Encounters with Science and Technology’ providing a strong visual identity and graphical concepts. In 2019 Fingerprint Collective joined hands with Jo and the wonderful team of artists and writers from different countries to design, manage and execute ‘Exchange & Flow’ workshop. www.fingerprintcollective.com



The Writers,

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Generate activity and
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for thinking.
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Dr Hannah Drayson
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Jacqui Knight
Udit Parekh

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Mirror our activities back
to us by documenting and
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Amit Bhavsar
Jacqui Knight
The Fingerprint Collective

Lampers
Shine lights ahead to where
our ideas might lead.
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Mark-Paul Meyer
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